This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07484226 5

D THAT IS SPUN

MARGARET HORNER CLYDE

Asnvat
NEW-YORK
SOCIETY
LIBRARY
1758

Asmvat
NEW-YORK
SOCIETY
LIBRARY
1758

N190

THE THREAD THAT IS SPUN

BY

MARGARET
HORNER
CLYDE

L.C.

BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1915

Co

NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
78961B

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

COPYRIGHT, 1915
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

To

MY FATHER

and to

THOSE DEAR KINSFOLK

in whose home has been revealed
the charm of an oldtime community

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	In the Settlement	1
II	The Sale of the Parsonage Farm	8
III	Outer Darkness	15
IV	A Strange Sunday	25
V	David	31
VI	The Gleam	39
VII	August Lilies	46
VIII	Captivity	52
IX	The Path of Duty	62
X	The Thread that is Spun	68
XI	A Spring Housecleaning	75
XII	The Hand of Progress	81
XIII	A Strange Land	87
XIV	The Approaching Cloud	99
XV	Janet Vanquished	106
XVI	The Far Country	115
XVII	The Lost Document	127
XVIII	Sweet Fields Beyond	134
XIX	From the Pages of Horace	146
XX	The Promised Land	154

CHAPTER I

IN THE SETTLEMENT

"But," urged the Rev. Mr. Clendenin, holding his tiny glass of currant wine toward the light, "how do you escape the doctrine of predestination?"

Mr. Walker smiled; he was a courteous host. Then,

"I yield to no power in heaven or earth the control of my own life or that of my family."

For in the Settlement thirty years ago theology was as indispensable as wine. They were an argumentative people, these Scotch-Irish whose ancestors had pushed their way into the province of Pennsylvania,— then a vague and unmapped region; had there built their log houses, and had set burning in the wilderness the torch of their religious faith. And the faith which had inspired the "Solemn League and Covenant," had animated those "conventicles" upon bare Scotch hillsides, still burned clear within the forests of a new land. These, their descendants, inherited their characteristics together with the tranquil stretch of farm land still known as "The Settlement." Therefore, the Rev. Mr. Clendenin and his elder, David

Walker, through the golden hours of a June afternoon discussed over their wine the doctrine of predestination.

"All I say," concluded the latter, "is that if my boy were predestined to be a murderer, I'd thrash it out of him," for at the moment three children entered — Lavinia Clendenin, her brother Richard, and David Walker, the small son of the house — stirred by some childish quarrel which Lavinia expounded into her father's cravat, twisting a clerical button between sobs.

The men took the children to Mrs. Walker, whom they found in the kitchen with a store of freshly-made jelly before her. Having comforted Lavinia, she turned to hold each glass of jelly to the light critically, and when to her practiced eye the sun could show no flaw in its carmine clearness, she deftly sealed it with a circle of paper dipped in brandy and ranked it with the rest against the wall.

At the stove a stout negress bent above a ponderous vessel, her black arm bared to the elbow, poising a spoon over the bubbling mass. At intervals she skimmed from the surface the froth as it rose. At last she swung the cauldron from the stove and dipped into its seething contents three rose-geranium leaves.

The minister watched her in interested silence as she waited for the exact moment of proper flavor and temperature before pouring the crimson stream into the glasses.

"You're a master hand, aren't you, Aunt Judy?" he commented. "Now I couldn't do that if I tried a year."

"O' co'se not," replied Aunt Judy with the audacity of the intimate house-servant. "But some folks natchelly has sense. De good Lawd," she continued, "made some folks to preach sermons and some folks to make jelly, and if dey mixes up dey job — well, I don' know which'd be de worstest, de sermons or de jelly."

She laughed her deep laugh, and her fat sides shook.

"Tain't no kind o' use," she finished, "to go agin de Lawd."

"There, David," triumphed the minister, "there's predestination for you."

"Do you mean to say, Aunt Judy," pursued Mr. Walker, "that a man comes into the world ticketed with his destiny? If so, what would you do about the thieves and murderers? Did God intend them to be thieves and murderers?"

"I wouldn't do nothin'," was the prompt reply. "De Lawd made 'em, let de Lawd take care of 'em. Ain't dey all His chillen?" she cried, turning to the minister. "When l'il Davie here fin' my strawberry preserve a-cookin' in de sun and lick 'em outen de jar an' den say de bees done got 'em, Mr. Walkah he don' ast, 'Aunt Judy, what you got ter say 'bout dis boy?' No sah, he say, 'He's *my* boy.' An' den he go down to de brook an' he take out he pocket knife an' cut

a l'il willow switch. An' he take dat willow switch in one hand, an' Davie by da othah hand, an' lead him up behind de bahn."

She paused to laugh again. "Dere's lots o' folks in de world," she concluded, "dat ought to be took up behind de bahn."

The minister smiled involuntarily.

"Yes, Aunt Judy," he said, "a good many of us need discipline."

Then he turned and joined his host at the gate, before which marched the stately columns of grain fields, halting where the sunlight clothed the distant woodland in a shimmering haze.

"Do you know," ventured Mr. Walker, "I want no better life than this, here on the old place where the Walkers have always had a respected name. But for the boy I have plans —"

Something like a war-whoop interrupting them at that moment, they turned to observe at the end of the yard Richard, executing what might have been a battle dance, while David was engaged in standing upon his head.

"Come, Richard," called Mr. Clendenin. And ten minutes later he was on his way home, his two children marching soberly before him.

It was now several years since he had been left with the care of them, Lavinia scarcely more than a baby, Richard not many years older. He never forgot the first night he put them to bed. It was a long and disconcerting process as he fumbled with unaccustomed fingers over their elusive but-

tons. If they had been Greek verbs he could have disposed of them in half the time.

Later he had secured a housekeeper to whom he delegated such care, but for the training of their minds, he depended upon himself. Education to him began with saying one's prayers and ended only in familiarity with Virgil or St. Augustine, with whom he himself lived in daily intimacy. Yet since he must plunge in somewhere, he began with Lavinia and the Shorter Catechism.

It was not, however, until some months after this June afternoon just described, one bleak November day, in fact, with the trees outside making queer angular curtsies with every blast of wind, that he took the child into his study and seated her upon the shiny hair-cloth sofa between the windows.

"My dear," he began, "every little girl should know the Shorter Catechism. But as you are such a *very* little girl, we will begin with just one question."

Thus he opened his campaign with the discretion of a general who should train a cannon upon a sparrow twittering in the tree a yard away.

"Man's chief end," he pronounced, "is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Haltingly the baby voice pattered after him. Then came the explanation. Lavinia listened with wide, uncomprehending eyes. And yet some notion of his meaning must have filtered through, for all her life the mere words "glory" and "enjoy"

called up before her a vision of sodden skies and bare November branches.

Over and over she said the words, parrot-like, until at last she was allowed to slip down from her stiff seat and was rewarded with a handful of raisins from a bag on the desk. The raisins she accepted with tentative politeness (they had been carried in the same pocket with her father's tobacco pouch), but her freedom she welcomed with hilarity.

There were other days, many of them, when she sat upon the hair-cloth sofa and struggled with Effectual Calling or the Benefits of Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification — crisp white days when by turning her head she could see the boys skating in the meadow, enticing days of spring with the subtle fragrance of cherry and pear blossoms in the air, or summer days when every bee and butterfly that hummed at the open window called its imprisoned comrade out to play.

Those hours were very long ones, the hair-cloth sofa very slippery to her little starched skirts. Sometimes she would let herself slide down in a heap on the floor, but she was always promptly reinstated, while the doctrines of the church went steadily on. Once indeed there was an interruption, when in the midst of the Decrees of God she ran screaming from the room to rescue a robin from the clutches of her pet cat.

But if Lavinia proved docile, the same could not be said of her brother Richard. His discipline

took the form of Latin etymology — which he loathed. Day after day he was set down to master the intricacies of *bonus*, *bona*, *bonum*, and the like, and day after day he rebelled openly and persistently.

He took circuitous routes home from school, he invented important business at other boys' houses, he implored the housekeeper to charge him with errands in the village, and once he even contrived to have the teacher keep him in after school. But all to no purpose. With him all roads led to Rome — to Rome and an inexorable parent with a Latin Grammar open on his knee. No matter how late the hour, there was no supper for him until he had recited his *amo*, *amas*, *amat*, and he came in time to hate the very sight of the book.

Thus there widened between father and son a chasm deeper than either realized until it was revealed as by a lightning flash one April day in Richard's sixteenth year, by which time he had been dragged to the point of writing fairly accurate Latin and reading an occasional ode of Horace.

CHAPTER II

THE SALE OF THE PARSONAGE FARM

There was to be an important meeting in the law office of Timothy Hayes that April afternoon to effect a transfer of property in which the whole Settlement was interested, for the Parsonage Farm, which for a hundred years had formed the setting for the grey old house in which the minister lived, was now about to be sold.

The circumstances of the sale were characteristic of the locality, for this little community of Scotch-Irish was set in the very heart of a Pennsylvania German population, and the sale of this property to one Peter Wallichner, who was typical of his race, was but one more step in the process of absorption which was wiping out the very identity of the Settlement.

Not only Timothy Hayes, but the whole room, looked expectant. The books behind their locked doors were arranged in accurate rows like soldiers on parade; the desk had been robbed of its pleasant litter; the whole place presented the strange and embarrassed aspect of a small boy on the eve of speaking a piece.

By two o'clock there had arrived the officers

of the church along the road which curved like a brown ribbon around the green fields of the Settlement. A moment later Peter Wallichner entered with his wife. He was a plump and florid man, very patient, very industrious, very honest. But if integrity was written upon his face, it was blurred at the moment by embarrassment. He paused in the doorway awkwardly until Timothy Hayes, who prided himself upon his supply of Pennsylvania German idioms, threw him a friendly "*Wie geht's heut?*"

"*Oh, so ziemlich goodt,*" responded Peter with relief, for the most baffling obstacle in all his experience was the English language. His wife, on the other hand, could not only keep her house shining, cook meals for a dozen men, take the place, herself, of a man in the fields; she could also drive to market, produce cheeses and butter made by her own hands, and bargain with her patrons with a wholly adequate knowledge of English and a veritable talent for finance. "De paper vants rain," was her contribution to the conversation.

Then the minister managed a whole sentence in dignified High German — which, if he had but realized it, was exactly as intelligible to Peter as English, for the Pennsylvania German dialect pursues a course midway between the two languages, with occasional excursions into by-paths known only to itself.

The last to arrive was a deaf old lady from Boston, whose consent was necessary to the pro-

posed transfer of property. The reason for this necessity was one which struck its roots deep into the history of Pennsylvania.

When early in the eighteenth century the pioneers of the Settlement built their log cabins beside the wigwams of the Indian neighbors, they did so without title to the land, for their coming was almost exactly coincident with the death of William Penn and the consequent closing of the Proprietary Land Office. The Land Office remaining closed for fourteen years, they held their land under imperfect titles during that period. But so upright were they, they were never molested by the savages about them, who, from the moment when an Indian squaw brought a gourd of water to the first thirsty seeker for a site, showed them uniform kindness.

It was later, when the younger Penns came into authority, that troubled years began for Pennsylvania. Much of the land supposedly theirs had never been actually purchased from the Indians. To obtain it they completed the Walking Purchase, whose fraud and cunning are well known to the history of Pennsylvania. By this the Indians were cheated of their valuable hunting grounds along the Delaware River. It caused their undying hatred against the white man and resulted first in a series of massacres and finally in the French and Indian War. In these perils the people of the Settlement suffered no less than others.

While it was not until the completion of the

Walking Purchase that the Penns' title to the land was made perfect, still they had previously accepted money from the settlers, who paid for their lands in full confidence that they would later be confirmed in their title to them.

After the Walking Purchase, however, the Penns made large grants of land to other persons, and the farms of the Settlement being a part of these grants, their owners found themselves compelled to pay for them a second time or to forfeit them. Some families removed from the neighborhood at this juncture. Others, with characteristic persistence, set about rebuying the same farms or others near them.

There was, however, one lasting result of the matter. Indian massacre and the injustice of compatriots had taught them the lesson of caution. Thereafter no purchase or transfer of land but was safeguarded by all the formalities which the law afforded.

The yellow old papers lying upon the desk this April afternoon were an index of that caution. Conspicuous among them was one labeled "Parsonage Farm; Instrument of Trust." This paper with the deed itself told the story of the land which was today to be sold.

The deed with much legal circumlocution conveyed the land to certain persons, representatives of the contributors to the purchase of the farm. The names of these contributors were recorded separately, a round dozen of them, and the stipu-

lation was made that the land could never be sold entire or in part without the written consent of a majority of these contributors or their heirs.

With the tireless enthusiasm peculiar to legal documents, this paper then went on to explain that one vote only could be cast by the heirs of any contributor, such vote to be cast by the eldest living son, or failing that, the eldest living daughter. If there were no children, then the principal heir mentioned in the will of the deceased contributor held the right to vote. If there were no such heir alive, then the eldest living son of such heir, etc., etc., for several sprightly paragraphs.

Fortunately for Timothy Hayes, a majority of the heirs of the long deceased contributors still lived within the bounds of the Settlement. But others of them during the intervening generations had been scattered from the Atlantic to the Pacific and even to lands beyond. Written consent had been obtained from the more distant ones while some happened to be visiting the Settlement. Hence, the deaf old lady from Boston.

Her arrival was the signal for the appearance of a servant with a tray of cake and wine. This disposed of, and an ear-trumpet adjusted, the business in hand was begun.

"You understand," the lawyer explained, dropping his phrases slowly into the ear-trumpet, "that your great-grandfather, John Wilson, was one of the contributors to the purchase of this land. Therefore —"

"And a remarkably well-preserved man he was. Lived to the age of ninety-two. I remember in my childish days —"

"What I mean to say," interrupted Timothy, "is that you, as his representative —"

"No, no, that was my *uncle*, John Wilson, same name. He went to Congress as Representative from —"

Timothy grasped the trumpet firmly. "We are keeping these gentlemen waiting," he said decidedly. "I have here the paper which gives consent to the sale of the property. It must be signed by you as the representative of your great-grandfather, John Wilson."

He spread the paper out upon the desk and after arranging the heavy rings upon her fingers, she took the pen and signed her name. The other necessary signatures followed, and the paper was folded and put aside.

The consent to the sale having been thus legally granted, there came next the reading of an agreement on the part of Peter Wallichner to leave the church in undisturbed possession of its present parsonage (for a yearly rental specified) during the existing pastorate.

Peter listened intently, as did the others present. Then he put his name to the paper. The real business of the afternoon followed rapidly — the actual transference of the deed and the payment of the purchase money — and Peter and his wife went home in complacent possession of their new estate.

The others lingered a little, talking, while the lawyer gathered up the yellow old papers and the newly-written ones of the day's transaction. The minister agreed to go into town the next day and return them to their place in the bank.

Then the assemblage dispersed, the deaf old lady to her cousin's, the others to their homes. The afternoon was drawing to a close; the lawyer lay back in his chair with the pleased consciousness of a task successfully accomplished; and the Parsonage Farm was no more.

CHAPTER III

OUTER DARKNESS

While the minister was engaged in Timothy Hayes' office, his son was loitering home from school. It was a blank day for him. A plan for going fishing with some other boys had fallen through; nothing appeared upon the horizon of the next few hours except the detested lesson from Horace; and he was conscious of that emptiness of interest which is one of the frequent trials of youth. He was vaguely unhappy, and his unhappiness seemed the more hopeless because so impossible of analysis.

The house seemed big and lonely; Lavinia was not yet home from school; the housekeeper was out gossiping at a neighbor's; even the study looked empty without its accustomed stern occupant.

For the immediate relief which youth demands, he unlocked the door of his little workshop and took up his tools. On the bench before him stood a small chest, a trunk in miniature. It was stoutly made of selected wood, and every hammer stroke had been his own. He had taken it to a locksmith in the village to be fitted with lock and key, so that nothing remained to be done but to

add his initials upon the end. This he did by driving small brass nails along the curves he had penciled.

He bent over his task, more and more intent, until his earlier mood had almost vanished and he found himself actually whistling. But in an instant his cheerfulness was pierced by a sharp memory. He heard his mother's voice speaking to him across the years. Just as she had approved the various small achievements of his babyhood, so she seemed to give him approval today — not praise, but just recognition. He heard her voice with a distinctness that was almost physical; he half turned as if to answer,— and then he remembered.

It was not that he missed his mother much or often. Protected by his extreme youth, her death had been hardly a grief to him. And yet, practical, blunt boy that he was, there were dim recesses within his soul which he rarely entered and whose existence he would have died rather than admit. He never spoke of her now, although once he had tried to recall to Lavinia some incident of their companionship with her. The child had been responsive, sympathetic even, but wholly uncomprehending; for to Lavinia the memory of their dead mother had become less than the shadow of a dream.

And yet in those moments when he thought about it, he seemed like some lone traveller behind whom lay a path which had sloped down into the valley

of the shadow, and so deep had been the shadow that upon emerging from it he had been conscious of nothing but relief and the immediate joy of escape. But now upon the upward path again, he could look back across the valley to that other slope, and the higher he climbed the more distinct became those early landmarks.

He felt not bereavement exactly, but a kind of bewilderment. He would never hear that voice again,— that was the marvel of it; not the depth of the valley from which he had emerged, but the length of the road ahead. It must needs be a long path, for it ended only at the gates of eternity.

So bare did the house seem as he walked through the rooms, he would have welcomed even his father and the inevitable Horace with him. But the study was still deserted. The minister had not returned. He set the chest he had just finished where it could not fail to catch the eye as one entered the room. He surveyed it with quiet pride and an undefined hope that his father might notice it and speak. He locked and unlocked it, then fitted into it his books and left them there. Afterward he selected a slender volume from the pile and sat down beside the window to study.

"*Tu ne quaesieris*," he began — and paused. A robin darted from the blue above and perched for a moment friendly at his window. He felt comforted by its companionship and turned again to his book. "Do not seek to know," he translated

haltingly, then stopped to consult his lexicon. "Do not seek to know, Leuconoe, what end the gods will give to me, to thee —"

A wagon rattled down the road. He rose and craned his neck to watch it out of sight. Then he returned resolutely and did not lift his head until he had reached the last sentence, "While we speak, envious Time will have fled; seize today —" But he got no further, for his father had entered the room and stood before him.

Mr. Clendenin was irritated and in haste. The long parley in Timothy Hayes' office had tried his temper and his brisk walk across the meadow had not restored him. He threw down the papers he was carrying and reached for his well-worn Horace. In doing so he struck the new chest which was standing upon his writing table.

"What's this?" he demanded peevishly. And as Richard made no reply, "What do you mean by piling my table up with your things? Take it away."

The boy obeyed silently — very silently. He set the chest upon the floor close against the wall. Then his father opened his book and settled himself in his chair. In a moment his brow had cleared. He was most affable — for his Horace was his delight. There was no theological research so severe, no round of pastoral visiting so fatiguing, that he could not find immediate relaxation in the urbane companionship of this charming old pagan.

"Now this Ode to Leuconoe," he began, "is written in a meter which Horace has employed in but three of his odes. It is known as the Asclepiadean verse." He then went on to describe it in detail. Richard listened coldly.

"As for the subject matter—" and again he was off upon a fresh theme. Richard sat very still, making futile stabs at his book with his pencil. Once he looked at the clock. The hands were moving steadily on; it was almost suppertime. The words of his lesson struck him with sudden grim humor—"*Dum loquimur, fugerit invida aetas.*" Surely envious Time *was* slipping on. And there seemed no end to the stream of information which was being poured out upon him.

In the long after years Richard Clendenin came to realize that his father was indeed a scholar whose intimate and full knowledge of Latin literature was a thing remarkable, but at the moment he sat and writhed under the torrent which seemed as merciless as it was impersonal; for the teacher, in the enthusiasm of his subject, had completely forgotten his pupil.

It came to an end at last with, "Now translate the first line." Richard began obediently. A faint echo of a voice had bidden him do his part. Laboriously he accomplished the first sentence, only to be sent back to the beginning with scorn of his faulty syntax. A second effort proved more successful, and in time he worked his way down to the last line.

But the light had begun to fade now beyond the treetops and it was quitting time by all signs. He could hear Lavinia singing upstairs; across the hall the housekeeper stepped about setting the table for supper; and from the kitchen beyond came the keen odor of melting butter and the fragrance of freshly steeped tea. He was very hungry, he realized, and the promise of warmth and companionship which the waiting supper table held out to him was alluring. He stumbled over the last line of his lesson like one running in sight of home.

An incisive voice cut him short.

"*Carpe diem* — imperative mood — watch carefully now and don't be a dunce." The boy whitened as if struck by a lash.

"Begin that sentence again." No reply save a tightening of the pale lips.

In the tense silence which prevailed, the boy drew a paper from the table and scribbled upon it absently.

"Are you going to obey me?" The boy went on scribbling with bent head.

"Very well, my son," and Mr. Clendenin rose with an air of finality, "very well, my son; you may stay here until you do."

"Understand me," and he turned in the act of leaving the room, "you will have no supper until you tell me that you are ready to obey. A rap at the door will be a sufficient signal."

Then he went out and slipped the bolt in its socket.

Lavinia's childish singing stopped abruptly; in the dining-room the housekeeper dropped the silver she was carrying, at sight of the minister's face.

"Mrs. McCrea," he announced, "Richard will not join us at the table to-night."

"And shall I save his supper for him?"

"No. He is to have no supper until he finishes his lesson. You may put the food away."

Then they sat down, the three of them in silence. It was a dreary meal. Mrs. McCrea was frankly embarrassed, the minister abstracted, while Lavinia kept her eyes fixed upon her plate and pretended to eat until the tears finally choked her.

But to the boy across the hall, smarting with the indignity of being treated like a child, the light that streamed out from the suppertable and filtered through the chinks of his prison door stood for all he knew of home. And he somehow kept thinking how the Bible spoke of "outer darkness."

Lavinia that night tossed upon her little white bed and listened for every sound. The evening had been a miserable one and she had slipped off upstairs at the first chance. But it had been midnight before the light shone out from her father's bedroom window. Up to that time she had known his every movement. Each time that he went from the living-room to the study door and listened, she had listened with him. And when at last he had called to his son, she knew that he had received no reply but silence.

Now she still kept guard — watched and waited

until the light at her father's window at last went out. Then she slipped out of bed and reached for her clothes. How long it seemed before her searching fingers fitted the buttons to their places, and how cold and small her feet felt as she thrust them into slippers.

Cautiously but resolutely she pushed open the door until a creaking hinge set her heart to jangling like a huge bell in an empty house. She paused an instant, then reassured by the engulfing silence she pressed on.

Downstairs she went and through the dining-room, until she came at last to the dim, wide kitchen. There the moonlight showed her each familiar object. She opened the bread box and placed three sugared buns upon a plate, inspecting them carefully at the window, for Richard preferred the very sticky ones.

Then she took a tumbler from its place and drew back the bolt of the outside door. On the threshold she paused. Never had the cave where the milk was kept seemed so far away. And she realized that she had never been outside the house alone at night before.

Midway of her journey a weird sound rent the air and she stopped, her heart again jangling. It was only a neighbor's dog, she realized after a minute, howling to the night. But an irresistible terror possessed her. From babyhood she had been afraid of the dark, but the dark was as nothing to this ghastly moonlight. The dark at worst

was but a soft warm cloak which protected even while it blindfolded you. But this moonlight left you naked and unarmed while it leered at you and pointed with ghastly fingers at a thousand perils lurking in the shadows.

The child was horribly afraid; therefore she ran — not backward to the house but forward to the cave, for she possessed (though she would have been the last to claim it) the courage of all her ancestors.

Step by step she descended into the Egyptian blackness of the cave and returned, carrying the glass brimful of milk. A few drops spilled as she turned to bolt the door and she had the forethought to stoop and wipe them away with a wisp of grass that the morning might find no unnecessary traces of her raid. At the door of the study she paused and listened.

"Richard," she whispered, "Richard, aren't you hungry?"

There was no reply, so she unbolted the door and stepped inside. The moonlight here was even more ghastly than out of doors. It heaped the shadows higher in the corners and pointed out with sinister fingers the gilt lettering of the books. Origen, Jerome, St. Augustine seemed themselves about to step from out the dim vista of the room, their tombs deserted that they might people this still haunt of scholarship. Lavinia shivered, then moved boldly forward to where her brother sat, his bowed head in his hands.

"Richard," she pleaded, "here is some supper. Eat it, *please*; you must be hungry."

The boy lifted his head and regarded her proudly.

"Do you think I'd touch a mouthful of his food?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes, Dick, of course you would. Don't lay it up against him. He'll feel different in the morning."

"Yes," he replied — and there was an ominous quiet in his voice —"yes, he'll feel different in the morning."

It was two o'clock when Lavinia at last drifted off to sleep. The moon by this time had ridden deeper and deeper into clouds, and the wind had risen in wrath. When she wakened in the morning, the rain was dashing at the window and the whole country writhed in the grasp of a tempest.

Her first thought was to run downstairs to the study. She found the door still bolted on the outside. Within there remained the glass and the plate with a few crumbs of sugar adhering. On the floor beside the table stood the chest with its *R. S. C.* upon the end. It was locked with the key gone. Beyond that there was absolutely no trace of the boy who had kept pace with the night hours in that room.

CHAPTER IV

A STRANGE SUNDAY

The Settlement in sunshine is a fair and spacious place, but when the clouds settle and blot out the hills, it becomes a dreary stretch of sodden earth.

It was so to Mr. Clendenin that April morning. In the first hurried hours when messengers were sent to nearby houses in search of Richard only to return baffled, anger possessed him. But when his own careful exploration of the village revealed no clue, he felt a humiliation so deep and bitter that he sought his home by a seldom-used path, choosing the difficulties of a rain-soaked road rather than the eyes of villagers, sympathetic though they might be, upon the thoroughfare. For the publicity of the boy's rebellion was as wormwood to his soul.

Reaching his study, he locked himself in and sitting with bewildered senses, he let time drift past him while the storm raged on without. When the clock with measured strokes aroused him, he drew out his watch mechanically to compare the two. In that instant he remembered his promise to return the church papers to the bank in town and saw that he had barely time to reach the train.

Mr. Clendenin was not the man to allow any private concern to interfere with duty. Train time found him at the station. Arrived in town, he questioned the ticket agent, who was interested and friendly — also garrulous.

"Yes," he rehearsed, "there was a boy here when I came to open up. The night operator he seen him jump off the freight that gits in here from your place about four o'clock. He acted queer when he asked how soon he could git a train for New York. He give me this for his ticket and said he'd send the money from the city." He fumbled in a pigeon hole and brought out a gold watch.

The minister snatched it from his hand. Like a sword thrust was the *R. S. C.* graven on the back.

A half hour sufficed for a dash to the bank with the papers and left a margin for telegrams — to a detective agency, to Lavinia stating that he was going to New York to find Richard. And then the train hurried him on, impatient, to his search.

Lavinia meanwhile wandered vaguely about the house. How quiet it seemed with only the rain tapping with spectral fingers at the window panes! Her father's telegram she handled curiously, then laid it carefully between her best embroidered handkerchief and her black lace mitts. It seemed portentous, like the day itself.

By afternoon the sun struggled feebly through the clouds, and she slipped out to the garden where

she sat soberly upon the round stone doorstep. The garden already exhaled the fragrance of spring. The rich brown earth steamed beneath the April sun. Violets blue and white flung upon the air their drenched sweetness. But Lavinia did not run to gather them as upon other days, for this was a day apart.

It was Saturday. The kitchen, spotless and shining from its weekly cleaning, lay deserted, for the housekeeper a full hour ago had ascended the creaking stairs, not to descend again until the tall clock on the landing should measure out the hour of five. Saturday afternoon in the Settlement was a kind of vestibule in which to put off one's shoes of daily toil before entering the sanctuary.

Lavinia sat gravely upon her round stone step. Was it only yesterday she had run lightly home from school to find Richard laboring over his Latin? How stern his face had looked in the moonlight. But he had taken the milk and the buns. She had been so careful to select the sticky ones. Where was Richard now?

Later she picked her way across the meadow to the Walkers', where she found Mr. Walker fumbling with his farmer's fingers over a book of sermons, for he, too, had had his telegram and must arrange for the Sunday's service. Mrs. Walker from a room upstairs called to her. She was laying out her best black silk upon the bed; the room smelled of lavender. David came in, balancing an assortment of fish hooks upon his palm. "Great

joke this of Dick's," he said. "Wish he'd let me into it. I'd have gone along."

At church the next day a sense of importance possessed her as she sat demurely in the minister's pew. The congregation, so familiar to her, wore a strange aspect, as when one views a well-known landscape from a new window.

In front of her in Mr. Boyd's pew sat Mrs. McPherson, elaborately neat in her shabby gown. Sunday was her great day, for however difficult might be her weekly struggle with poverty, on Sunday she could sit with her cousin, Samuel Boyd, an elder in the church, and be "as good as anybody." Janet, her irrepressible daughter, sat by her side. Lavinia regarded her as from an infinite height; for Janet, one would have told you, was unspeakable. She sometimes employed the sermon time by smelling the flowers in her mother's bonnet or by toddling on unsteady legs from pew to pew. Once when the July heat had proved too much for her mother's nodding attention, she had escaped altogether and reaching the foot of the pulpit steps, had captured the collection plate, flinging its contents wide with infant glee, upon which her mother, awaking with a start, had conducted her briskly down the aisle and out of doors to spank her behind a convenient tombstone.

Sarah McPherson's attitude was one of bewildered resignation toward the vivid little personality which seemed not so much an accident as a huge joke on the part of nature — a joke, that is,

until one knew her father. But one made the acquaintance of Jerry McPherson, not in church on Sunday, but at the tavern on almost any hour of almost any day.

In the pew behind sat Aunt Peggy Craig, with whom, after the service conducted by the elders, Lavinia went home to dinner. Aunt Peggy was a slender, bright-eyed little woman who lived alone in her square stone house and wore her widowhood like a crown.

Lavinia went with her gladly. Her house was always associated with pound cake and blackberry wine, but today it was Aunt Peggy herself that she wanted. Indeed there were few people in the Settlement who did not come some time or other to want Aunt Peggy. Ever since that black year which had snatched husband and children from her, Aunt Peggy had belonged to all humanity.

It was small-pox, that sinister thing which Lavinia always regarded as some remote monster, greedy and insatiable, which had plundered Aunt Peggy's home. A vagrant peddler, sleeping at night in the Craig barn, had died of it there. Later, during the space of one week, the grave had closed over Hugh Craig, who had given him food and care, and the two babies as well. And now it was Aunt Peggy, alone in her grey stone house, to whom every sorrow and perplexity was brought.

Lavinia, watching her as she stepped briskly about setting lavender-sprigged cups and plates upon the snowy cloth, found herself rehearsing the

the village school and lacking for his college examinations only that touch of Latin and Greek which the minister alone could give, came daily for lessons.

David laid hold of the classics with the same keen appetite with which he rode a horse or played ball, and the mere recital of the familiar Latin words was to the minister like the inflowing of healing blood into an injured limb, so that he no longer displayed an open wound though he carried — and concealed — a scar as lasting as life itself. (For your genuine Scotchman unclothes his body publicly as readily as his soul.)

David Walker, since the days when he had stolen Aunt Judy's strawberry preserves, had had a troubled boyhood, and the willows at the brook had suffered constant depredation. Not that he was exactly bad, his mother argued, but he could think of so many things to do.

"And I must say," remarked his father, "that this thing of training up a child in the way he should go seems remarkably likely to make him go the other way."

His mother contended that gentle means were best, and upon one occasion, after talking with him earnestly, she had left him locked up in his room to meditate. An hour later she found the door open and the boy gone. He had picked the lock. "And I thought," she protested, "that he *couldn't* get out, for I bolted the door on the *outside*."

"Mis' Walkah, honey," counselled Aunt Judy, "dat's just de trouble. You'll hab no peace till you get de bolt on de *inside* o' de boy.

"But don' you fret," she added, "you keep on a lovin' ob him, an' let Mistah Walkah keep on a thrashin' ob him. An' between de two, de good Lawd gwine take care ob him. But it's de lovin'," she finished, "dat counts de most."

As for loving him, the whole Settlement loved David Walker. He had the quick, imperious manner of his father, and his mother's irresistible smile. Among his fellows he was a leader whose originality and daring often brought them all into disgrace. But he never shirked the blame, never lied, never went back on a friend.

Lavinia in particular followed him about much after the manner of a small dog. If he climbed the tallest tree in the orchard, so did she; if he waded the stream on a short cut to the village, so did she; though he seemed distinctly though good-humoredly bored by her emulation.

Matters came to a climax, however, when the girl one May afternoon came ambling up the lane from a raid upon a distant woodland where the finest arbutus grew. She was riding her father's horse, a staid and sober animal of whom it had been said that while he distinguished accurately between a wedding and a funeral, he never at any time accelerated his pace to a speed unbecoming the profession he represented.

"Lavinia," questioned David at the gate, moved

to mirth by the sight of so decorous a beast, "why don't you ride a cow?"

The color raced into her face; her grey eyes flashed like steel.

"I'll ride Ajax, if you say so." And she sprang from her own horse and went toward his.

But David caught her by the arm. The derision died out of his face.

"Don't you dare," he said soberly. "He'll kill you. He's never known the feel of a skirt."

Lavinia laughed. Apparently she yielded. The two of them followed the path to the house. But later, when a monotone of Latin verbs assured her that she was unobserved, she slipped out to the gate, took the horse by the bridle, and led him noiselessly up the lane and across a field to a point where the lowered bars gave access to the back road. There she mounted him.

The back road was not a much-travelled thoroughfare at best, and today, with the mud of springtime still lying deep beneath the mold of leaves, it tempted no one. There was no one, consequently, except the little birds twittering in the trees above to see a blooded horse rearing and plunging there, while a slip of a girl with set lips and fearless eyes clung to him like wax. Presently he began to run — frantically — dashing the soft mud right and left until at the turn of the road a grove of chestnut trees snatched him suddenly from view.

Meanwhile the lesson in the study had ended,

and Mr. Clendenin walked with his pupil to the gate. David had taken but a step when he stopped and stared. His horse was gone.

"He must have gotten loose and gone home," suggested the minister. But David said nothing. He followed with the practiced eye of a country boy the footprints of the horse and the girl up the lane and into the field. Then he came back. "Lavinia," he explained briefly, but his very lips were white.

They would have gone in search of her, but there was no need. Even now along the road came a little procession of men, and it needed not the sight of the doctor in his high boots and long riding coat to tell what was the burden they bore.

They brought her into the house and laid her down, white, unconscious, and almost pulseless. Her childish skirts were torn and muddy, the rippling masses of her hair dark and wet with blood. She had not even moaned after she was thrown.

It occurred to Mr. Clendenin after this episode to cultivate his daughter's acquaintance, and often as she sat with bent head over a book or a bit of detested sewing (since he had forbidden her to ride again) he watched her thoughtfully. She had her mother's slender hands and feet, her mother's little toss of the head. There was even a dawning coquetry in her. And yet the child was not fifteen.

That fall David Walker was ready for college. It was a crisp autumn day when he set out from home, one of those days of startling brilliance

which September sometimes sets like jewels against the silver of her frequent mists. When he turned at the bend of the road to lift his hat in gay farewell, he could see through the intense clearness the grey house in which he had been born, the dark poplars at the gate, the white barn, cut cameo-like against a sky of almost Italian vividness.

And no less articulate were the mental impressions which that day left upon the remaining occupants of the house. To the end of life any one of them could have told you how they went back silent into the empty rooms; how his mother began to stitch with absorption the wrist-bands of a fine shirt, only to abandon that occupation for the more active one of rearranging the linen-closet; how his father wandered about, now reading intently, now figuring upon a scrap of paper the net profit upon the year's wheat crop, until at last he was caught red-handed checking off upon a pocket-calendar the weeks that must elapse before the Christmas holidays; how Aunt Judy vigorously swept the spare bed-room which had not been used for a month, then scrubbed the milk-house floor which had been scrubbed the day before; and how all three, when their paths converged, talked with notable politeness about a case of small-pox in the next county, about the coming presidential election, about the prevailing famine in India. It was not until supper time that any one ventured upon a topic less remote.

Then his father mentioned casually that the

night was blowing up cool and David would probably need those blankets he took along for his bed, and Aunt Judy coming in with a plate of her famous muffins observed sternly, " You ain't neithah one ob you eatin' anything," while his mother dropped her head and frankly sobbed.

That evening Mr. Clendenin came in. Aunt Judy had laid a fresh fire upon the hearth, and before it they sat and talked far into the night. It was not so unusual, they brought themselves to pretend, for a boy to enter college at sixteen. The minister recalled a man in his class who had done the same. While as for David's trick of Latin and Greek, were there not records in history of boys who had relished Homer at ten?

As for his future they could not agree. The minister clung stubbornly to the Scotch idea of educating one son for the ministry, his father held out as stubbornly for the law. And when his mother ventured gently that the boy himself might have a word to say, both men turned upon her that look of pitying tolerance with which womankind has been wont to be silenced since the dawn of civilization.

The Christmas holidays brought a swarm of youthful guests, and instituted the procession of merry-makings which marked the progress of the boy's college course. One could readily believe the report that David Walker was the most popular man in his class.

It was during these years of college life that

Lavinia began to put on dignity. She no longer climbed trees and waded the brook, and that recklessness which had dominated her childhood became more distinctly a quality of the spirit only.

The village school had by this time done its utmost for her, and though her father made brave suggestions of sending her to boarding-school, he compromised with duty by sending her into town at stated intervals for a trifle of music and of painting, and a wholly harmless amount of French.

Among the admiring city youth whom David brought home with him from time to time she gained the reputation of being both daring and demure. And if she was often incomprehensible, she was always charming.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLEAM

During these years of dawning womanhood for Lavinia, her brother was heard from but once. He was traced to Liverpool, England, whence eager inquiries on the part of his father brought back only the baffling intelligence that he had taken passage two weeks earlier for Australia. And so again the sea of silence closed over him deeper than the blue barrier which marked the physical distance between them.

Meanwhile certain changes had taken place in the household. The housekeeper was gone, and in her place had come that irrepressible child, Janet McPherson.

When Jerry McPherson died, the Settlement wondered what Sarah would do. It was much discussed in the half hour preceding the funeral service, and when Samuel Boyd, her cousin, took the minister aside and said, " It's this way. I'd take Sarah with me today and provide for her to the end of her life if it wasn't for the child," Mr. Clendenin suggested that they stay and talk it over with the widow after the return from the cemetery.

Sarah McPherson received the proposition with gratitude, though she seemed chiefly dazed. It was to her at the time only another strange development in a strange day. From the moment when she had opened her eyes to the dawn to the time when she again sought her solitary bed, she moved like one in a dream. To sit down to meals provided and prepared by other hands than hers, to feel about her person the richness of black garments far finer than any she had ever been able to buy, to ride in a carriage over the dusty road along which her tired feet had so often trudged, these were enough to set the day apart forever.

That she owed each separate kindness to some friend and neighbor did not disturb her satisfaction, for she was at once too weary and too simple-hearted to accept ease with anything but the same acquiescence with which she had all her life accepted hardship. And she was too devoid of humor to perceive the incongruity of regarding the day of her husband's funeral as the one holiday of her life.

Janet, on the other hand, was by no means devoid of humor, and yet it was she who put the matter in a nutshell. "Do you suppose Papa's up in heaven now?" she asked.

"Why, of course." And Mrs. McPherson's voice shook with indignation at any possible Calvinistic theory which should claim her husband's ill-spent life as ground for contradiction.

"Well, then, maybe he's had as good a time to-

day as we have. Say, Mamma, didn't we have an awful nice supper?"

And so Sarah McPherson went to live with Samuel Boyd and Janet became an inmate of the parsonage. She was shy at first, but full to the brim of an energy that led her to beg for more and more responsibility, since, though in no sense a servant, she was determined to earn her board; and of curiosity as well, as Lavinia discovered when she almost fell over the child one day, listening at the keyhole.

"Don't let me find you listening again," she admonished sternly.

"I didn't mean to let you find me this time," retorted Janet. "You opened the door too quick."

Another change was the new house across the lane which Peter Wallichner, immediately after buying the Parsonage Farm, had set about building for his family. It was a frame house, amazingly clean and bright in its fresh paint. And as it faced the grey old parsonage, the two structures gazed at each other perpetually, the new and the old.

The Wallichner family inclined to girls, but about midway of the procession came George, blond and dimpled like the rest, and only to be distinguished from his sisters by the early bifurcation of his garments. He it was who soon attained to the distinction of carrying to the minister's house a daily supply of milk.

Upon this errand he rarely got further than the kitchen, but one day it happened that he was sent to the study for his pay. The minister at his desk looked up vaguely. It was an achievement to catch and hold his attention upon any practical matter. One could almost watch his mind detach itself from some point of early Christian doctrine and travel down the corridor of years until it reached the present century and took cognizance of a farmer's boy in stout boots and overalls standing somewhat abashed before him.

George was by this time well-grown, able to handle a team in the fields, and already drinking deep of that Pierian spring known as a public school education. But in the village school he had not even sighted those streams of knowledge which were now revealed to him in the minister's study. He stood dumb with amazement, gazing at the rows of books while Mr. Clendenin laboriously shook pennies out of a small black purse.

It was some time later that Lavinia, on her way home from her French lesson, came face to face with him at the gate. He took her books and carried them to the door, flushing as he did so.

Inside the house she gave him a mere nod of thanks, tossed off her hat, and ran upstairs. But he, watching, lost not a single glint of gold in her chestnut curls, and when he turned to enter the study he was not the same boy who five minutes earlier had left his home. He had come to the house with a determined purpose. He left it with

a second purpose as determined. He meant to marry Lavinia Clendenin.

He had not been inside the study since that day when he had marvelled at the books upon the shelves. But on that day there had been planted a seed which through the intervening months had germinated as surely as the kernels of wheat in his father's fields. He intended to possess this intangible thing called an education.

As he left the house Lavinia heard him say,

"My pop, he vill lick me goodt."

"Father," she inquired, "what did George Wallichner want?"

Mr. Clendenin took off his spectacles and polished them. His eyes had the pleased look of one who has just spied a gold coin in the dust.

"He wants to go to Normal School," he answered. "And his father threatens to — to — chastise him if he persists. He brought me twenty-five dollars to keep for him. He has hoarded it dollar by dollar through a period of years."

Lavinia felt a leap of amazement. She had never dreamed it of him.

But it was Mr. Clendenin who best appreciated the boy's earnestness of purpose and when in presenting the prizes at the village school he placed in George Wallichner's hands a volume of Tennyson, he opened it to the words:

"And ere it vanishes
Over the margin,

After it, follow it,
Follow the gleam."

Normal School, however, was not the end of his ambition. To the dismay of his parents, he *would* go to college. Janet, who regarded the whole Wallichner family with mirth because of their remarkable English, found in this a puzzle upon which to exercise her nimble little brain. "Going to college, is he? My father went to college," she commented bitterly, "and all the good it did him was that when he came home drunk he used to recite the 'Odyssey' while we were putting him to bed."

Two days later George Wallichner started for college. It was early in the morning, but the informality of the Settlement permitted him to stop at the door of the Parsonage for a last word.

Lavinia heard him from her room as he talked with Janet. The dew was lying upon the September meadows; it was a golden day. She sighed at the memory of another morning, dark and drenched with rain, when another boy had set out — with no farewell — to seek his fortune.

The hurt of it was in her heart as she went downstairs to find George standing in the kitchen doorway, his tall figure almost blotting out the sunlight, while Janet in her crisp gingham stepped about preparing breakfast. That he had been teasing her, Lavinia knew by the disdain in the girl's face. But she stepped briskly from table to stove, her pretty nose in the air. Her

deft fingers flew, and soon there mingled with the dewy fragrance of the fields outside the aroma of coffee and of bacon browning to a crisp.

At Lavinia's entrance, George looked at her with that expression of deference which she could never quite understand. He spoke earnestly of his plans. And when at the door she watched him tramping down the lane, his high young head bared to the radiant sky, it was not his physical beauty which held her. It was the purpose in his face. For she felt dimly that here was a spirit which would never yield and never fail.

CHAPTER VII

AUGUST LILIES

David Walker was now about to enter upon his senior year at college, and on Sunday night he walked through the vibrant twilight across the meadows to say good-bye.

He had richly fulfilled the hopes of his family, for that trick of Latin and Greek which had so captivated the minister was but one evidence of a mind of remarkable brilliance, so that many a seasoned professor followed him from the class-room with that look which the sculptor bestows upon the masterpiece growing beneath his eye.

And quite as striking as his intellectual were his social gifts. It was said that he was the one man in college who could do everything. To Lavinia there was no escaping the fact that he could still climb taller trees than she, but she never resented it now.

She received him that night in the rarely-used parlor, a prim room where respected ancestors looked politely down from the walls, where Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter occupied the bookshelf, and where the very air seemed to have been bottled for present use sometime in the past century.

Lavinia pushed up the small windows, but it took all of David's muscle to lift the rusty latch of the outside door and set it swinging upon its cumbrous hinges. It opened upon a tangle of coarse grass to which one stepped by a scarcely perceptible descent across the round smooth doorstep. On either side of the doorway stretched a bed of August lilies still abloom, and with the opening of the door their fragrance streamed in upon the air.

Lavinia was in a violet muslin whose crisp ruffles swept the floor; her hair was drawn into a shining mass above her face; and the marvel of her maturity moved David strangely. Through all the commonplaces of their conversation he was conscious of it, and when at last he held her hand for a moment in farewell, a kind of reverence contended with the excitement leaping in his veins. And yet no word was spoken to disturb their old relations.

Lavinia in later years tried to recall the conversation of that evening and could only remember his spirited account of "Old Bones" who taught them Calculus; of his goloshes always standing outside the door, which a sportive Sophomore one December day filled with water; and of the old gentleman's dismay when he shuffled out at the close of the recitation to find them frozen solid.

Such was the fabric of their speech, college jokes and college hopes, with just a little youth-

ful planning for the buoyant future, but so impersonal and so impalpable that no memory of their words lingered with her. And yet behind their words was a something indefinable which made the blood leap in her veins and caused her to look forward to David's next visit at Christmas time with a startled eagerness that was half dismay.

But at Christmas time he did not come home; a hilarious party elsewhere demanded his presence. And his father's pocket calendar began its task of recording the weeks before Commencement.

The question of his profession was still unsettled, and he himself was too much absorbed in the present to think much about the future. And then four months before his expected graduation came the message to his parents which changed the world for them.

Mr. Walker read it first with perplexity, afterward with anger. Then he packed his portmanteau, carefully brushed his Sunday clothes, took his gold-headed cane, and set out upon a mission of wrath. Other men's sons might be expelled from college, but not his David!

The college was a small one. Something of the informality of a home prevailed there. When Mr. Walker went straight to the president's house and demanded an interview, it was granted him promptly.

For two hours the two men sat behind locked doors. The father by turns raged and appealed.

The president listened attentively, and not once did he lose his look of sympathy. Then he explained gently. But if his language was euphemistic, his meaning was unmistakable, that a common drunken street fight was no trifle.

"But a first offence —" contended the father.

The president regarded him a moment in pitying silence. It was so far from being a first offence. Then he laid before him those other instances in which the boy, inflamed by wine, had jeopardized his own reputation with that of the college in as unquestionable if less public a manner. And he explained how only the high regard in which David was held had sufficed to stay his punishment so long.

The father drew himself up stiffly. There was some mistake, he argued; that his boy had a temper he knew, but as for being intoxicated, it was preposterous. *No gentleman* would drink to excess.

Then the president with the persistence of a physician probing an abscess laid bare the loathsome details of his proof. Only once during the recital did the father speak, to demand with a flash of his wonted imperiousness why the college allowed young men to debauch themselves. And the president replied, "What restraint could be permanently effective except the restraint which comes from within?" When at last the door closed upon Mr. Walker, he looked ten years older. And there were tears in the president's eyes.

In the boy's room father and son met with the formality of strangers. And as they talked of the future the unnatural flow of their words was like some swollen stream which conceals gaunt wrecks in its depths. Much of the time David stood beside the window gazing sullenly out across the quadrangle, and the strong light showed mercilessly the marks of recent dissipation, the flushed face, the twitching fingers, and the slouch of the whole figure.

His father regarded him with three separate sensations. With the detachment that comes in moments of high feeling, he seemed to stand off and see these thoughts side by side in his mind with stiff little partitions between, like the herbs in Mrs. Walker's garden.

In the first place he realized with something like amusement how inadequate the low door frame at home where he had recorded the boy's increased inches year by year would now be to measure his remarkable height; in the second, he was glad that the boy's mother was not present to see him; in the third, he knew that he had never wanted Mrs. Walker so much in all his life before.

Upon one point father and son agreed; David was not to go back to the Settlement until he could do so without comment. For both had that kind of pride to which sin itself is less ugly than disgrace.

The next turn of affairs, however, could not be concealed. The newspapers carried it into every

home in the Settlement. For the man whom David had struck down with his powerful arm, suddenly, to the stupefaction of the whole college, died.

The law moved with sickening precision and swiftness. It was in September that he was tried, convicted, and sentenced. His father and mother were present at the trial. The rest of the Settlement sat at home and read the proceedings each day from the papers. On the last day it happened that Lavinia Clendenin received the news alone in the prim parlor where she had parted from him. Again the heavy door swung open upon its hinges; again the lilies blooming over-late swept the room with clamorous sweetness.

Straight down the pitiless column she read, through the lawyer's summing up, through the account of the retirement of the jury, on to its verdict, and the judge's sentence of imprisonment for fifteen years in the penitentiary. Then the paper dropped from her grasp, and when they found her prone across the low doorstep, the lilies that touched her hair were not whiter than her face.

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTIVITY

Morning and noon and night, and day again. And so the months marched past, twelve of them, until Lavinia, still benumbed, kept in silence her bitter anniversary. One year was past — but one — of the merciless fifteen which might have been to her appalled senses fifteen centuries.

No earliest memory of her childhood but was connected with David. To tear him out of her life threatened the very integrity of her being. Her first instinct then was the primal one of self-preservation. She must immediately find something to live for, something to do.

This something was obviously her father. For it was astonishing how fast he had aged. It was not simply that he was forgetful, so that she found it necessary to keep a record of his engagements, nor merely that he was careless of his person, though it was an open secret that she apportioned him clean linen much against his will, and was forced to keep certain familiar but threadbare garments under lock and key to prevent his wearing them into the pulpit. (It was the high water mark of achievement to see him safely into church on Sunday morning with no more startling ir-

regularity of attire than a soiled handkerchief, perhaps, produced from some unsuspected pocket.) It was not these things which marked him so much as his hardness of spirit. His attitude was that of one who has a quarrel, bitter and relentless, with fate.

Lavinia bore with him day by day. All the old willfulness seemed gone, and in its place appeared a sweet unselfishness by which she was illumined as by some inner light in which the hitherto unrecognized beauty of her spirit glowed.

And so a second September came. A second year was past. And after it would come — and go — another and another. And sometime — sometime — she paused breathless at the thought. It was as though across the blackness of midnight there shone the far, faint glimmering of dawn. Yes, there was one thing more she could do with her life. She could *wait* — for David.

And no sooner had she determined upon this than all nature seemed to wait with her. It was a blessed thing that they two were country bred. For while the aspect of a city may alter in a month, the hills, the fields, the streams, abide.

She paused one day at the study door, watching her father as he sat almost submerged in books. The half-written outline of a sermon lay before him, surrounded by a rampart of Latin fathers, but they kept guard in vain — Jerome, Origen, St. Augustine. Mr. Clendenin lay back unheeding, on his knee his preferred Horace.

Lavinia noted every detail of the room. The carpet was threadbare from his frequent pacing of the floor; his desk and bookshelves were dusty and littered beyond the endurance of any housewife, yet he had forbidden her to touch them; his old dressing-gown hung in fringes, its sleeves looking as if rubbed with wax, yet she knew that nothing short of a surgical operation could separate him from it.

And so she sighed as she watched him sitting there, rolling out the ponderous Latin phrases under his breath, although even to one as little lettered as she there was a certain magic in the sound, for in the stately syllables one seemed to hear the sweep of togas and the sound of hoof-beats on the streets of Rome.

She was roused abruptly by a knock at the door. It was Mr. Walker, looking old and worn, though his voice still showed something of his earlier imperiousness as he demanded to see the minister.

The ruin of his son's career came close to every heart in the Settlement, yet, characteristically of the place, no open sympathy was offered to the father and mother as they set out with stern acquiescence across the years which stretched like some grim Sahara before them. It was a lone and desert journey whose only mile-stones were those yearly visits upon which they set out in silence and about which no comment was ever made.

At first they could not talk naturally with their

son because of the horrible spell of the place, and the boy was by turns sullen and defiant. He worked frantically at his trade of making shoes as if by physical exertion to deaden thought, and in his eyes one read that hunger of the mind which unfed leads swiftly to madness. Later they found his cell filled with books — Plato and a dozen others which he read as desperately as he worked. Beside them lay a notebook filled with comments written in his sharp, nervous Greek.

It was of the boy that Mr. Walker talked today behind the closed study door, of the boy and of the struggle to pay off the costs of the trial, to accomplish which he had decided to sell the farm "on the other side" as it was called to distinguish it from the farm upon which he lived. Before night Lavinia learned that the farm was to be sold to Peter Wallichner.

"Does David know?" she asked.

Mr. Clendenin looked grave. "Not yet," he said. "It was only the last time they were — there — that he asked how the new orchard was doing on the other side."

It was then that Lavinia determined to write to David. She had not written at first because she was too stunned; later, because she knew not what to say. What could one say in the face of a disaster whose only counterpart was death?

But now — now that she had seen the light — why not write? No earliest crocus of the spring, no latest tangle of bittersweet and sumac upon

the hillside but reminded her both of the days when David had ridden buoyantly along the highway and of the day to come when David should again be free.

Why not write him just this? Doubtless they would tell him of the sale of the farm. But while the ownership of the land might change, the fields themselves were lying golden in the sunlight waiting for his eye to rest upon them. Let others tell him of the changes; she would tell him of the things that never change.

It was a long letter that Mrs. Walker carried in her reticule upon their next journey to David. In it Lavinia spoke no word of herself, but instead outlined a picture of brook and meadow and chestnut grove, of grey stone houses, of a brown ribbon of a road along which travelled busy men and women, just as they had done for a hundred years, just as they might do for a hundred years to come. And this letter, when his parents were gone, David opened and read in the sickening solitude of his narrow cell.

They were deadly years which had dripped away since the heavy iron grating had blotted out for him the sunlight. At first he was conscious of nothing but frantic, futile rage. His mind went back from point to point of the trial. They had labored hard to prove a motive for the crime. Motive! When he scarcely knew the man he had killed. All he remembered was a night of wild revelry, ending in blindly striking out against a

blow as blindly leveled at him. Only his blow had struck home. And so this ghastly end. Ah, if only the other's had been the fatal one! Compared to this slow torture, how small a thing was death.

He thought much of that gentle, grass-grown slope where slept the Walkers of many generations. What would he not give in the gloom and horror of this place to be lying where the free air of heaven might play over his head, where bees and butterflies might feast upon the clover growing above his silent heart!

He laid yearning fingers upon the throbbing jugular vein and debated how slight a thrust would suffice to free his spirit. If he had but the semblance of a knife — but they had stripped him bare.

He felt no shame in this unmanly desire since, garbed in a uniform and identified only with a number, he was no longer a man. The only parallel he knew of to his case was that of a great lion he had once watched pacing without pause his narrow cage. All the vanished freedom of the desert, all the savage joy of life, spoke in the beast's deep-set eyes. There was power there, and supplication — and despair.

So he today, akin to nothing human, felt the baffled rage of the beast. He, too, for having shed blood had been hunted, trapped, caged. He was like to nothing but that ceaseless pacer with the tragic eyes.

To this frenzy succeeded a period of prostration in which he was still the animal, but humbled, tamed. He slept and ate and slept again; and filled the hours allotted to it so full of work that he almost cheated thought itself.

But again the brain beset him, demanding food under threat of madness. It was the chaplain who then came to his rescue with Greek and Latin from his private library. This he read greedily at first as one who starves, later with the discriminating judgment of the scholar. He translated, compared, considered,— so that his father, finding a notebook filled with quotations from the Stoics, read here and there from Epictetus:

"To each man a director, his own good genius — a director sleepless and not to be deceived.— Appear to know only this, never to fail nor fall. — If you always remember that God stands by — you will never err."

And from Marcus Aurelius:

"To be pleased and content with what happens, and with the thread that is spun.— and not to defile the divinity which is planted in his breast. — Within is the fountain of good, and it will ever bubble up if thou wilt ever dig.— Whatever any one does or says, I must be good, just as if the gold or the emerald or the purple were always saying this, 'Whatever any one does or says, I must be emerald and keep my color.'"

He looked at his son curiously. These were

strange companions for hot-headed youth — this Phrygian slave, this Roman Emperor.

But there came a time when even this resource failed. He had filled hands and brain full, but something else remained to torture him through the long night. For he could not sleep. That was his physical signal of disorder. The prison physician gave him medicine — a little. But nothing served to more than interrupt the merciless march of midnight hours.

He kept pace with them by recalling each person that he ever knew. One face a night he allowed himself. He imagined himself in his father's pew on Sunday looking over the congregation. There was the minister — and Richard. How long Richard had been gone. He must be dead. For surely no one would remain away who *could* go back. And so he went from pew to pew until few remained. What was he to do when he reached the last face?

It was almost time for his parents' visit. He could hold out until then. But after that? Well after that there was one resource — a last one. It had been offered him by a fellow-convict in one of those stolen moments which escape even the eye of a prison guard.

That there was an illicit traffic going on about him he knew, but he had always kept aloof as though he, too, were saying, "Whatever any one does or says, I must be emerald and keep my

color." And yet why should he, since he was no longer a man? One little portion of the drug slipped skillfully to him, and he might enter that path whose end is utter degradation, but whose gateway is — sleep!

And so they came, his father and mother, and told him all the little foolish things that parents think of, and then they left him behind those inexorable walls, with Lavinia's letter in his hands.

Lavinia! He had not dared to think of her — the innocent child. Somehow the avalanche which had overtaken his life wiped out his later memory of her and he thought of her only as a child. An intrepid child, she was, always clambering up steep banks, always brave, and always following. She had been brave enough to follow him even into prison. And now she did more. She led him out of prison.

For in reading her letter the massive walls fell flat; once more he was out upon the highway with the wind whistling in his ears; once more he was riding Ajax along that brown ribbon of a road that bound the green farms of the Settlement. But most of all she saved him from ruin. For that night behind the grating of his cell — he slept.

Morning wakened him to a keen sense of hope. What was it that had come back to him? His manhood. For now he had a purpose in life. He would be worthy of that courageous child. And

he would protect her from himself. He would not acknowledge her letter. It was his to work and to endure, and to lay upon her spotlessness no lightest finger of his blood-stained hand.

CHAPTER IX

THE PATH OF DUTY

To Lavinia the winter dragged interminably. Of course David would write. Morning after morning she rose to fresh hope. Today or tomorrow at most she must see again her name in those vigorous strokes she knew so well. But no letter came. For the first time in both their lives he ignored her.

Perhaps he was not allowed to write. But he was, she knew. Perhaps he was ill. But he was not,— this too she knew. There was, then, but one meaning. David had forgotten her. David did not care.

And with the conviction came a dulling of all life, as if the sun had paled in the December sky, the earth frozen to the core beneath its blanket of snow.

It was thus that she stood listless at the window one day, her eyes fixed absently upon the glittering road, polished like steel beneath persistent travel. In the distance she saw approaching the commanding figure of George Wallichner. He was coming to his father's house, no doubt.

George Wallichner, since the morning when

Lavinia had watched him tramping down the lane on his way to college, had travelled far. During his college course he came home but seldom, for throughout the term he studied absorbedly and throughout vacations he worked as absorbedly. Thus only was he enabled to keep abreast of his class, for not one penny did his father — the wealthiest man in the Settlement — contribute toward his expenses. And not one word of approbation did he receive from his family in his wanton pursuit of that utterly profitless thing known as an education.

When he did come home, he seemed a stranger in his own household, so completely had he stepped out of the old tread-mill of toil. Even the dialect of his people he had slipped off as easily as the heavy boots he had once worn in the fields. And yet he was in essentials his parents' own child. He had the abounding good health and good humor of his mother, and the amazing ability of his father to make — and keep — money.

He was now practicing law in town, where his father, having tried diligently to thwart his career, was inordinately proud of calling upon him at his office.

It was a small office and rather bare of furniture, the desk and chairs which it did possess being like their owner, simple, substantial, practical. But it was well located, not far from the courthouse where a youthful lawyer might not unreasonably hope to have occasional dealings, and near

enough to the current of traffic to profit by those drifting bits of business by whose aid a young man newly launched keeps himself afloat upon the uncertain sea of the legal profession.

George Wallichner, however, had little need for drifting bits of business, his success from the first having been phenomenal. His physical attractiveness, his charm of manner, and that marvelous mental poise which always enabled him to see clearly without emotion and without prejudice, these brought him an increasing practice which placed him in the front rank of his profession.

All this Lavinia thought of vaguely as she watched him coming down the road and into the lane. But he did not stop at his father's gate. Instead he turned towards the parsonage and a moment later stood at the door.

She met him cordially, but there was a something in his manner distinct from the old familiar neighborliness, a something which she did not understand until later. For the day had now come when George Wallichner felt warranted in seeking to make her his wife.

Minutely, exhaustively, he described to her his circumstances, his prospects, his hopes. Then having carefully prepared his case, he submitted it with one swift question.

Lavinia gazed at him dumbly. Then after her first startled moment.

"You cannot mean it," she protested.

"I have meant it," he returned quietly, "for years. Do you remember the day — the first day — I carried your books into the house?" He smiled faintly. "And you stood on the stairway with the sunshine falling on your hair? From that day you have been the light that has led me on."

She gazed at him, amazed, contrite. "I — I never knew," she faltered.

He smiled again. "There was no need to know," he answered; "I could wait."

So this was the point to which the years had been leading her; this the end of her fruitless waiting! For Lavinia possessed as strongly as her father the sense of the inevitability of Life. She seemed to see before her in a flash a path from which she could not hope to escape.

Of course she asked for time; of course he granted it. And in the days that followed she pondered carefully her decision. His sanity, his sweetness, his constancy. He was so safe and — yes — lovable. His ability, his prosperity, which meant ease and pleasure for her father as well as herself. What had she to weigh against these? Nothing but a mesh of childish memories, the tissue of a dream.

And so the days crowded her, filled with the silent urgency of his desire until she felt helpless before them. There was no doubt what her decision must ultimately be, for it was the path of duty which

she saw before her, a path she dare not refuse to tread. Besides, had George Wallichner ever failed of any aim? How, then, could he fail of this?

But one day she sought the winding lane to Aunt Peggy Craig's house. How inevitably she followed that path in every crisis of her life. Not that she meant to confide today in any one. But there was something almost uncanny in the way those bright little eyes penetrated people's thoughts. In five minutes Aunt Peggy had arrived at a pretty shrewd understanding of Lavinia's state of mind.

"Don't tell me who he is," warned Aunt Peggy. "But is he the right man?"

"He is a good man," returned Lavinia conscientiously.

"Good," sniffed Aunt Peggy. "If you had said he was bad — when a woman takes a risk the man is worth it — sometimes."

"And prosperous," added Lavinia with a smile.

"Prosperity is nothing. The happiest woman I ever knew had all she could do to keep a roof over her head. And she had so many children — but that's what a woman needs, some one to work for and a baby in her arms."

"And you have no one."

Aunt Peggy's eyes grew wistful. She rarely spoke of her bereavement. Then,

"I had five years with my husband," she said. "And I had my two babies. Nothing can ever take that away from me. When they died I wanted

to die too. And your father came here and told me to be reconciled to the will of the Lord. Will of the Lord! Why it wasn't the will of the Lord at all.

"It's just this way. He made Hugh so full of tenderness that he couldn't see a bird fall out of the nest without stopping his work to put it back. And when that poor peddler came here sick, he just had to risk his life to help him. He did it because the Lord had made him that way. But it was the small-pox, not the will of the Lord, that killed him."

"And you never thought of marrying again?"

Aunt Peggy smiled a queer little twisted smile.

"I *had* to think of it several times," she said. "But there's this strange thing about marriage. What you give once you can't ever give again. Just once, Lavinia, you find someone you can strip your soul to. To be spiritually naked and unashamed, that is the test. And some of us can't do that twice."

The girl sat very still gazing out of the window. Still it was marriage Aunt Peggy was speaking of. And besides — David did not care!

...OPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

CHAPTER X

THE THREAD THAT IS SPUN

And so the days came and went until it was February. And on almost every one of them Lavinia determined afresh to speak the word for which George Wallichner was waiting. Surely it was her duty, and from duty she could not hope to escape. But the word was never spoken, for always there interposed to strengthen her reluctance Aunt Peggy's wrinkled, radiant face, transfigured with a devotion which had defied death itself.

Then after a week of more than usual lassitude, Janet appeared one morning breathless at Samuel Boyd's kitchen door.

"Mother," she announced, "you'll have to come over. I've got Miss Lavinia in bed and the doctor says it's typhoid."

"Typhoid!" Mrs. McPherson went hastily upstairs and with the ease of long practice gathered up a few garments, having been for years the doctor's chosen ally. "Typhoid," she repeated, "the very thing her mother died of."

Something in the familiar aspect of the room where Lavinia lay struck a chill to her heart. It

was upon that very bed that years ago she had seen the girl's mother die. She recalled with a shudder how that life had gone steadily out like an ebbing tide while the doctor and she had stood helpless upon the shore. It should not be so this time, she resolved, and she set herself inflexibly to win the battle.

But it was a long fight. And there came a day when even the doctor shook his head and would venture no reply to the eager questions which met him everywhere throughout the Settlement.

It was just then that Mr. Walker set out upon his annual journey, going for the first time alone. For Mrs. Walker's increasing frailness could be no longer ignored. From her bed she watched him pack his portmanteau, brush his well-worn Sunday clothes, and take his gold-headed cane; and when the door had closed upon him she turned her face upon the pillow and wept.

In the prison that afternoon father and son met without her, and both men were silent after the first words of greeting, for both felt like belated travellers who see at the end of the way a silent house, the lights out and the guests departed.

Mr. Walker remembered first a foolish message from the boy's mother, and David listened hungrily to the story of how the clematis had climbed over the wall beneath his window at home and the vines above it had clambered to the eaves.

Afterward came news of the Settlement including Lavinia Clendenin's desperate illness (a woman

would have seen the muscles tighten beneath the prison pallor) and her supposed engagement to George Wallichner.

That night the prisoner paced the floor of his cell from starlight until dawn. Then he took up the little copy of the "Meditations" lying beside him and underscored: "Whatever may happen to thee, it was prepared for thee from all eternity.— Life must be reaped like the ripe ears of corn."

Later a letter came for Lavinia, marked not to be opened by any one but herself. She was lying at that moment supremely conscious between life and death. It was the moment they feared, the moment of choice. For the body, spent with pain, no longer contended; only the spirit paused to decide. They waited so close beside her, life and death, it required but an impulse of the soul to choose between them. Yet, even so, it rested with her to choose. Was there never then, after all, a path made sure before one? Must one always choose?

But there was one hint of guidance. Life meant struggle — the long hard climb uphill — while death would be so simple — and so sweet. With that thought there settled upon her a peace such as she had never known. Yes, she was free to go.

Into the intense clearness of her mind came one thought after another. How Aunt Peggy had wanted to die — and could not. And now she, Lavinia, was going first. What if she should find

Aunt Peggy's babies and take them in her arms? Her own mother was there, too, the mother that Richard remembered. Even in the midst of her absolute contentment she felt a little pang. If she could only have seen Richard once more!

Then she thought of her father. He would miss her, of course. But he had his books and his pipe. And Janet would care for him. George Wallichner? She would have been glad to make him happy. But he had life before him. Perhaps in time he would even come to thank her for leaving him free. And she wanted so to go.

And then they came and laid a letter in her hand. A letter bearing her name written with those masterful strokes she had not seen for years. And they told her that David wanted her to read it herself. *David!*

And so she could not die after all. For she must know what David had to say to her. And to know she must grow stronger. And to grow stronger she must live. Upon the very verge of eternity, David had called her back.

The violets were already blooming beneath her window and a bluebird called from the elm above, when they finally raised her upon her pillow and let her break the seal. She could see across the meadows, green with springtime, the grey house from which David had set out for college so many years ago. There was even the path over which her childish feet and his had often scampered, the

same path his feet had trod that September night when the lilies bloomed and she had laid her hand for the last time in his.

And then she read her name in those sharp characters of his that sent the blood surging to her head so that the words swam in the mist that gathered before her eyes.

But suddenly the mist cleared and certain phrases stood out distinctly, so that long after the letter was folded and laid beneath her pillow, her eyes still saw them like peaks against the sky.

"You were the bravest child, Lavinia. I think of you most often as a little girl, the little girl, who was never afraid. No water was too deep, no tree too tall, for you to venture. And if you fell and hurt yourself, you never cried.— You are brave now, I am sure. They tell me that you are facing death. Perhaps even now as I write you are looking with those grave eyes of yours upon the eternal mysteries. If so, you will never read these words, but you will know all and more than any words of mine can say. But whatever fate awaits you, may you experience the fullness of joy that you deserve.—

" I have said that I think of you always as a child. But at night when the prison cell about me fades in sleep, and I, like other men, am free, you often come to me. You stand before me then as you stood that last night when the lilies were blooming around the doorstep, in your violet gown with your crown of shining hair and those little curls about your ears. Did you ever know how I loved those curls? This vision of you, too precious to be trusted even to the

touch of daily thought, I carry ever and shall carry to my grave. If I never see you again, and it is best, I think, that I should not, remember that I have your image always in my heart.

"What you are now, with the added richness of the years, I do not dare to think, lest I should shatter in a moment my long and hard-won peace. For I have found peace, Lavinia, where many an early monk was forced to seek it, in a solitary cell. Priest and pagan have alike helped me. I know now what fate does to us. It sets before us the fabric of our lives. And upon that fabric we work out our own pattern. We cannot choose our colors, but we can weave them as we will. You in your lovely womanhood are weaving a thing of beauty. I — even I — with my poor threads which I have tangled almost beyond hope, can still twist them into some sort of symmetry.

"If you are facing life, and you are if you are reading this, you are facing happiness, I hope. And in your happiness I want to share to the extent of bringing you the only gift I have to offer, my secret of serenity. It was a Roman emperor and a modest philosopher who many years ago summed it up. 'To be pleased and content with what happens, and with the thread that is spun — and not to defile the divinity which is planted in his breast.' That is all there is of duty, to accept the inexorable limitations of life, and to act honestly and triumphantly within them. This I have learned within these walls. Thus I out of defeat learned how to conquer.—"

The paper fell from her fingers and her gaze wandered out to those meadows where his childish

feet and hers had loitered. How far they both had travelled since those days! But David was still ahead — always ahead. While she was groping in the dark he had climbed to those high places of the spirit which are flooded with perpetual light. What a victorious soul was his, and how surely he had triumphed over the worst that fate could bring him.

Suddenly a sense of exhilaration possessed her, almost physical in its potency. David had praised her, had called her brave and lovely. David approved her. She would never again be weary or sad or hopeless. She would move through the days no longer a slave but a queen. For David had set a diadem upon her brow.

CHAPTER XI

A SPRING HOUSECLEANING

George Wallichner found in Lavinia's illness an embarrassing hindrance to his suit. But when the crisis was past, Janet, who throughout the weeks had proved a marvel of forethought and devotion, admitted him to the house.

"Miss Lavinia's getting well," she announced. "If this wasn't the parsonage, I'd get up and dance."

"Do," he urged, "and I'll join you."

At which she laughed and blushed. But, "No," she said, "these pious walls might come down on our heads. I guess the most we could do here would be to sing the Long Metre Doxology!" And she led him upstairs to Lavinia, who looked very frail in her chintz-covered chair.

A half hour later he found himself walking rapidly toward the station; never in all his well-ordered life had he been so astounded; after all his months — and years — of waiting, she had refused him! Never before had he failed in any ambition. Never had he dreamed that he could fail in this.

The amazing thing was that he had never had

a chance of success. That much he recognized without understanding why. For it is a fact that a man never possesses what does not belong to him, and George Wallichner, who had attained to an education, a position in society, a standing in his profession, because these things had always been potentially his, failed in winning the woman of his choice because she had never been his. Indeed she to whom he had talked today seemed an utter stranger to the Lavinia of his dreams.

It was years before he ever entered the house again, years so busy that they just escaped being bitter. And then one day, spring and the call of the fields took him back to the Settlement. At the scent of the steaming earth he drew a deep breath; he straightened his shoulders; and there seemed to slip from them the weight of years. Whatever his past, he was still young and life was yet good.

Janet, the taunting, dark-eyed thing, summoned him, brisk and busy in her crisp gingham.

"Come and help me," she called; "Miss Lavinia's away and I'm cleaning house."

Then she explained how Mr. Clendenin viewed her operations with apprehension, not to say alarm, so that she was unable to gain possession of the study either by force or strategy. Today, however, he was going to the village. And indeed he appeared as she spoke.

"Have you heard," she inquired of him, "that one of the Wilson boys fell from a loft in the barn and broke his arm?"

"Broke his arm! Which one of the boys was it?"

"I — I — didn't hear," faltered Janet.

"Well, well, I must go right over. Don't wait supper for me if I'm late." And he drove off in haste.

Janet watched him down the lane, then turned to her companion.

"George," she said decisively, "I'm going to get the study cleaned before he gets back, and you've got to help me."

Five minutes later she had him carrying pile after pile of books into the hall while she stood upon a stepladder dusting and handing them down to him.

"Mother," she announced as Mrs. McPherson appeared in the doorway, "you must help too."

She was a very determined person as she perched upon the top step of the ladder and issued her orders. George paused to regard her with admiration, to the imminent peril of certain Old Testament commentators poised precariously upon his arm.

"Are you going to take them all out?" he inquired.

"Every one. Not a sinner nor a saint shall escape." And she handed him Ovid along with Justin Martyr.

"Mercy what a dust! It's a great pity I didn't plant my early onions up here. Just see what a rich soil they'd have had."

Then she proceeded to the next shelf, which brought her on a level with George Wallichner's shoulder.

"These are little books," she explained. "Take them carefully. *Oh*, you awkward thing!" as several of them eluded his grasp and cascaded to the floor. "You aren't fit to —"

Then she stopped and turned hastily to the shelf again, the color flooding her face. The man beside her had said nothing at all. He had merely looked at her. It was one of Janet's grievances that George Wallichner never *did* say anything.

"You can talk yourself black in the face," she contended, "and he never says a word. The most exasperating thing in all the world is the person who won't answer back."

Exasperation was written upon her face now as she stood and savagely pulled out books. But she kept her back to her companion, tossing him books over her shoulder and giving him only a glimpse of her flushed cheek and the soft ripples of dark hair about her ears.

"Two pipes, a package of tobacco, and three dried raisins," she announced later, turning with recovered gayety, the articles enumerated in her hand. "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen — put them into the wastebasket, George."

"You're not going to throw them *away*," protested her mother.

"To be sure I am. They've been here for twenty years, I expect. And they'll be here for

twenty more if somebody doesn't do something. Throw them away, I tell you." And George obeyed.

"But what will Mr. Clendenin say?" persisted Mrs. McPherson.

"He won't say anything," replied Janet significantly. "By the time he gets back there won't be anything to say anything about."

And indeed by six o'clock when the minister appeared, the room had been swept and dusted and scrubbed from floor to ceiling and had again resumed its wonted aspect.

"Janet," demanded Mr. Clendenin the moment he entered the house, "where did you hear that one of the Wilson boys had broken his arm?"

"Where did I hear it?" repeated the girl — and her eyes had the innocence of a babe's. "Where *did* I hear it?" she murmured reflectively.

"Because," the minister explained, "it isn't true at all. None of the boys has had an accident of any kind. They couldn't imagine how the story got started."

"Is that so?" And Janet's voice expressed the greatest concern. "And you had such a long drive, too." Mr. Clendenin turned away impatiently and locked himself up in his room.

George Wallichner on the one hand and Mrs. McPherson on the other scrutinized Janet with increasing suspicion.

"Janet," questioned George, "did you make that story up?"

Janet turned upon him a pair of serious grey eyes, but the dimples were beginning to show around her mouth.

"Janet," cried her mother in horror, "did you tell the minister a lie?"

"Why no, Mother," she answered promptly. "I didn't tell him a lie. I just asked him a question. I asked him *whether* he'd heard that one of the Wilson boys had broken his arm. I didn't say whether *I* had heard it or not. Besides, how else could I have gotten the study cleaned?"

CHAPTER XII

THE HAND OF PROGRESS

"I thank God I am safely arrived in the province that the providence of God and the bounty of the king hath made mine, and which the credit, prudence, and industry of the people concerned with me must render considerable." Thus wrote William Penn to the Duke of Ormonde in 1683.

"The land," he says, "is generally good, well-water'd, and not so thick of wood as imagin'd; there are also many open places that have been old Indian fields. The trees that grow here are the mulberry, white and red, walnut, black and gray hickory, poplar, cedar, cypress, chestnut, ash, sassafras, gum, pine, spruce, oak, black, white, red, Spanish chestnut, and swamp, which has a leaf like willow and is most lasting.

"The air is sweet and cleare, which makes a serene and steady sky, as in the more southern parts of France. Our summers and winters are commonly once in three years in extremes; but the winters seldom last above ten weeks and rarely begin till the latter end of December; the days are above two hours longer and the sun much hotter here than with you, which makes some recompence

for the sharp nights of the winter season, as well as the woods that make cheap and great fires.

"We have of grain wheat, maize, rye, barley, oats, several excellent sorts of beans and peas, pumpkins, water and musk-melons, all English roots and garden stuff, good fruit and excellent cider; the peach we have in divers kinds, and very good, and in great abundance. The vine (of several sorts and the sign with us of rich land) is very fruitful, and though not so sweet as some I have eaten in Europe, yet it makes a good wine, and the worst good vinegar.

"I have observed three sorts, the great grape that has green, red, and black, all ripe on the same tree. The muskedell, black little grape which is the best, may be improved to an excellent wine. These are spontaneous."

This was Penn's description in the early days when the great natural resources which have made Pennsylvania a leading state in the Union were barely guessed at. And yet just as the first settlers found it a great garden whose fertile soil meant prosperity to succeeding generations, so its later inhabitants kept for the most part to agriculture as the chief industry.

This was especially true of the Settlement, where farms stretched fair and green from horizon to horizon, and where no more discordant sounds broke the stillness than the clatter of reapers in the fields or the lowing of cattle in the meadows.

A little to the west vast beds of coal, buried for

ages beneath the smiling surface of the land, were being robbed for the use of man. And where once had been forests such as Penn himself had found in his province, now there were thriving, dingy towns peopled with foreigners and built over these great excavations where thousands of men labored day and night. And everywhere throughout the region there was the same black blight upon the landscape; for beauty had given place to wealth.

But here on the eastern border of the state there was farming land still where the plow moved undisturbed, and the people of the Settlement had but a hint of the day when the limestone rocks around them should prove the magnet for a horde of eager capitalists. And yet when those rocks proved to be the cement rocks which have made possible one of Pennsylvania's greatest industries, that day was not far distant.

One after another the cement plants sprang up in other parts of the country. Farm after farm was sold to afford sites for the infant industry and material for its development. The Settlement, secure within its green fields, had felt the stir of traffic just beyond its borders, had seen the hills yield their stores to the men who quarried them, had heard the sound of machinery and of cars, but its own boundaries had not been invaded. The men continued to sow and reap, the women to plant their gardens; the minister settled deeper into his chair with his pipe and his Horace; Peter Wallichner drove his cattle up and down the lane; and

no one of them knew that Progress with ruthless hand was already knocking at the door.

Another spring had come, and as the train wheezed into the station one day in May, three strangers alighted upon the platform. There was some talk with the station-agent about a carriage, and Peter Wallichner's name was mentioned, but as it was a pleasant afternoon, the three finally set out on foot and loitered on their way. The sun lay golden on the fertile fields traced by zig-zag fences. No moving object broke the view, from the rippling stream on the right to the farthest grove of chestnuts against the sky.

"Clever notion these old farmers had," said the younger one, who had visited the Settlement before. "Follow the course of that stream and see how the line fences between the farms run, now on one side, now on the other. That's to give each fellow a bit of high ground for woodland and a frontage as well on the creek, like a strip of fat and a strip of lean in a slice of bacon."

Ten minutes' walk brought them to Peter Wallichner's gate, Lavinia Clendenin watching from her window. Arrived at the house, they knocked at what appeared to be the front door, but only silence answered them. The windows on either side with drawn shades looked blankly out. The immaculate porch upon which they stood, as well as the stone walk leading to it, looked as if it had never known the touch of human feet. But they were too unsophisticated in the ways of the Penn-

sylvania German farmer to know that they should no more have trodden upon that dazzling spotlessness than should a devout Mohammedan enter with shod feet the sacred precincts of his mosque. That entrance was dedicated to the high events of life. It would open to nothing short of a wedding or a funeral.

Then from somewhere behind them appeared a young girl beckoning them to the kitchen door, within which they could see Mrs. Wallichner, flushed and perspiring over her ironing, at her feet her youngest grandchild.

"We are looking," said the elderly man with as courtly a bow to Mrs. Wallichner as if she had been a princess, "for Mr. Peter Wallichner. Is he at home?"

"Yah, he vas shust at de barn. Annie, run piece-vays up de lane and fetch Pop.

"De little shicks," she explained as the girl disappeared, "dey vould run in de orchard, and Pop he said on a Fridays a'ready he vould make such a board on de fence to keep 'em oudt. But a Saturdays it gif rain, and den Pop, he had it so in his back, and I said, 'Oh, shust let it.'

"But no, Pop he goes on de orchard before dinner a'ready, and nails up de holes, and den he takes such a leetle box to make a coop for de old cluck. He vill not leave 'em go so."

Mrs. Wallichner as she talked was waving the party into the house. The elderly man went first, lifting his aristocratic legs high over baby and

basket of newly-washed clothes alike, the others followed, and the door closed.

A few minutes later Peter arrived, protesting as his wife brought slippers to replace his mud-caked boots. Then, "Wie gehts," he said, and seated himself before his guests.

In a short time the three strangers again emerged from the kitchen door and took their muddy way back to the station.

CHAPTER XIII

A STRANGE LAND

It was shortly after the visit of the mysterious strangers that Lavinia yielded to the magic of June and carried her sewing out beneath the trees. The clouds sailed high and white, and through the clear air each barn and farmhouse stood out in its turn as the eye travelled on to meet the horizon.

A letter lay in her lap, one of those rare messages from David to which it became increasingly difficult to reply. For how could they two write who had but one thing to say to each other — which remained forever unsaid.

"Only three years more," he wrote today, "and I shall see the sun. If I could lie down — just once — in the tall sweet grass in the orchard — but it cannot be. I shall never see the light trickling through those leaves again. When you are married and your children play there, show them which trees we used to climb. But I forget. The trees are gone, perhaps, already. No doubt the whole place has changed as much as I. But if I could see it just once as it used to be — I who can never come back —"

She was interrupted by the sound of hoof-beats. A carriage was stopping at the gate. There was

no mistaking the errand upon which its occupants had come. If one had not seen it in the young man's conscious air, one would still have known it from the girl's eyes.

Lavinia met them with concern upon her brow. No, she regretted, the minister was not at home. But she could direct them to the house where he was calling if they cared to drive on and bring him back.

The man turned to the girl inquiringly. "Yes," she approved, "you do that. But I'll wait here. I — I — my head aches." Her voice trailed off dismally and he stooped to see her face. But she turned her head away and barely touched his proffered hand as she sprang lightly to the ground and followed Lavinia into the house.

Lavinia seated her in her own favorite chair and made her take off her hat. "I'm afraid," she said, "it's the heat that has given you a headache."

"Oh, no," she replied vaguely, "it isn't the heat. I guess it isn't exactly my head that aches anyway." She was nervously stabbing pins into her hat as she spoke, her hair, yellow as a baby's, breaking into ripples against her flushed face. It occurred to Lavinia that she had never seen a bride who looked quite so young or quite so helpless, and as she left the room in search of Janet, she saw the girl settle herself back in her chair like a tired child. Janet was waiting in the dining-room, consternation written upon her face.

"Miss Lavinia," she announced, "here is a

wedding-party on our hands and not a scrap of cake in the house." Lavinia herself looked grave.

"If ever I do such a thing again as go off to town with George Wallichner and leave my baking till the end of the week."

"Never mind," Lavinia consoled her; "just get me a wineglass, Janet. I want to give this young lady some wine right away. She has a headache. She is going to wait here until the men get back. You know father had to be sent for."

"Oh," exclaimed Janet, "well that's all right, then. I'm glad she has a headache. Maybe that'll keep her from looking out of the window while I slip across the meadow to Cousin Samuel's to see what mother can do for us in the way of cake. If she hasn't a fruit cake locked up somewhere, then the McPherson family is disgraced forever. You run along, Miss Lavinia, and I'll be back before you know it."

A moment later her white skirts could be seen skimming over the meadow, and she was past the stile by the time Lavinia had returned to her guest.

The girl leaned forward and took the glass eagerly, but her fingers shook and upon her long lashes there were traces of tears. "I don't know what you'll think of me," she said, "but I've just wanted my mother so dreadfully today that I felt as if I couldn't stand it."

Lavinia made no reply for a moment; then as she took the empty glass, "My mother died when I was a child," she said.

It was perhaps the sympathy in the older woman's voice that made the girl look up with sudden resolution.

"I'm going to tell you," she announced, "just how we happened to come here today. When I said good-bye to my mother a month ago I never dreamed I'd be married before I saw her again. She lives in the west and she's an invalid, or she'd be with me now.

"You see it's this way. Ned is an engineer and he's been working near here, and I came to visit an old aunt of my mother's who lives about five miles away. She likes one of us to come every year and it was my turn. But she is so nervous that she can't bear any excitement, so I couldn't have Ned come to see me very often after all.

"And when he came last week and told me he was to be sent to South Africa next Thursday — why Miss Clendenin, I felt as if the earth had opened under my feet."

"To South Africa!"

"To South Africa. To the diamond mines there. Do you wonder it took my breath away?"

"No," replied Lavinia gravely, "I don't."

"He was just as gentle and patient with me as any one could be. He didn't ask me to go with him. He just said what should we do about it." Lavinia was listening intently.

"Well," the girl went on, "there was only one thing to do about it. I just couldn't let him go without me."

"No; of course you couldn't."

"And then we didn't know how to manage about being married. You see my aunt is so old and nervous, we couldn't have a wedding there. And I didn't know anybody else to go to."

Lavinia leaned forward impulsively and took the girl's hand in hers.

"I'm glad you came here," she said.

"I'll tell you how it came about. We drove past here one day and saw your garden. Your roses were coming into bloom then, and we stopped and looked at them. And Ned told me that the minister who preached in the village lived here. (Ned always knows everything.) And so when I was thinking and thinking what to do, all of a sudden I remembered. 'Ned,' I said, 'we'll go to that minister's where the garden is and be married there.'"

"My dear," said Lavinia, still holding the girl's hand, "you did the right thing."

"Yes," she replied thoughtfully, "I believe we did. I wrote to Mother this morning and told her all about it and that this was the day. And I believe that she will think, too, that I have done right.

"And yet, do you know, Miss Clendenin, that all the time we were driving along today, I kept feeling worse and worse about not having any of my own people here, until it seemed to me that what we were doing was — well — heathenish."

Suddenly she broke into a little rippling laugh.

"I'll tell you what I mean," she said. "Once when I was a little girl I wanted to be *real* wicked — partly to see how it would feel and partly to see what would happen to me. So I went to bed without saying my prayers. Well, of course nothing really happened to me only I couldn't go to sleep, and I got to feeling worse and worse until finally I slipped out of bed and said my prayers after all. I just couldn't take the risk.

"And that's the way I felt today. I don't suppose anything would really happen to me for running off and getting married this way, but I felt as if I didn't dare take the risk. And then when we got here and the minister wasn't in — well, that was the last straw. For I really had my courage screwed up after a fashion, and I could have gone through with it then. But when we had to wait — I — I — just wanted to run away and hide.

"I can't for the life of me tell what it was I was afraid of. Partly what I told you, I suppose, that it seemed wrong to be married this way, and partly the thought of a strange land — Africa seems so terribly far away — but most of all I think it was Ned himself I was afraid of." She said this with a kind of dismay, then paused and gazed absently out of the window, reasoning with herself.

"You mustn't think I don't love him," she continued earnestly. "*Love him*, why I could — well, you don't suppose I'd be going all the way to Africa with him if I didn't love him, do you?

The only thing I can tell you is that it was just like being afraid of the dark. Were you ever afraid of the dark, Miss Clendenin?"

"Yes," she answered, but she barely breathed the word for fear of interrupting. It was so necessary that the girl's mood should exhaust itself before the men came back, that she stood aside like one who watches some disturbed stream cleanse itself by the inrush of pure water, and feared to lift a finger lest she might check the flow.

"Well, Miss Clendenin, you know when you go into a room in the dark, even your own room, — everything in it seems strange. You know, of course, that all the little familiar things that you could lay hands on any minute in the daylight are still there, but yet it seems strange. There seems to be some big, black presence there, and you can't quite get your breath. That's the way I felt about Ned. Of course I knew he was just the same person I'd always known, and oh, Miss Clendenin, there isn't anybody like him. He is so strong — and — and — so tender. He couldn't ever do anything to hurt me, I know, and yet when I thought about *marrying* him — oh, it was just like a leap in the dark."

Lavinia Clendenin was a very sympathetic woman; she was also a very wise one. Therefore she said in her most brisk and business-like manner,

"My dear" (and she realized that she did not even know the girl's name), "I am very glad you

told me all this. But now while we still have a little time, I'd like to take you out and show you my garden."

As they passed through the kitchen door they caught a fleeting glimpse of Janet, her starched skirts just disappearing over the threshold, her proud dark head and flushed face thrown into relief against the dimness of the room behind her. Lavinia had also observed the plate in her hand covered with a snowy napkin and she managed a signal of housewifely relief before the door closed between them.

"Now," she said, turning to the girl, "I'm going to tell you the names of all these flowers. You may have trouble to remember them, I warn you. The early roses, you see, have begun to fade and this is the time to discover all the little old-fashioned flowers that trudge along through the summer. Here is London pride and portulaca and larkspur, and of course you know the four-o'clocks. You see they are just preparing now to wake up for the afternoon. They are interesting little things, but I think I like the fragrant flowers best. Here are clove pinks and sweet Williams, and soon the phlox will be in full bloom."

"I love them," exclaimed the girl impulsively, as she stooped and laid her face against the spicy blooms. "They remind me of little old ladies drinking tea."

Lavinia flashed her a look of delight.

"You are the right sort," she said, "to appre-

ciate a garden. I hear people say sometimes that it takes skill and training and money to have a successful garden, but it doesn't. It just takes a scrap of earth anywhere — and imagination.

"Now, I never thought about the little old ladies drinking tea, but I'll tell you what the hollyhocks are. You see how proudly they lift their stately heads above the wall and look out over the country. They are princesses gone up to the turret to watch their lovers ride away to the Crusades. Can't you see the blue brilliance of the sky close down over the white road as the cavalcade of knights rides on? Can't you see the sun pour over their glittering armor and feel the quick breeze that sweeps their plumes?"

"Of course I can. And I know just how those ladies feel. They are serene and beautiful. They have to be because they are princesses. But they are blushing, too, and they can't see the blue sky and the white road and the armor and the plumes quite clearly because they know that some of those knights will never come back."

Lavinia drew the girl down beside her upon a bench between the trees.

"Do you know," she said, "that when the gates of the first garden in the world were closed against man and were guarded by an angel with a flaming sword, homesickness was born. It is the instinct of the race to get back to the soil. We can never be happy until we do. You don't have to know anything about the Bible to believe that. There

was Antaeus, who wrestled with Hercules and who every time he was thrown received new strength from the touch of mother earth. That's the way it is with us, only we women get not so much strength as comfort. Wherever we can have a bit of earth to plant with flowers, there we can make a home."

"Can I have a garden in Africa?" inquired the girl promptly.

"It's the very thing I've been thinking of for you. Of course I don't know what kind of a place you're going to, but I should think you could surely have some kind of a garden. It is too early to gather seeds from these flowers, but I think I have some left from last year. We'll go into the house and look. Let me see, you'll be wanting to plant them as soon as you get there, won't you? Doesn't the spring come in the fall there?"

The girl laughed. "I guess so," she said. "Ned says everything is just upside down there."

When Mr. Edward Blake and the minister drove up the lane and entered the house, they found the two women poring over a big book entitled "The Young Gardener's Assistant." Lavinia was drawing tiny packets of seeds out of an old blue teapot, while the bride was writing upon them instructions out of the book.

Both women were so intent upon their work that they seemed to regard the questions preliminary to the marriage ceremony as an unwarranted interruption. Only when the minister had opened

his book and the bride had taken her place beside him who was to be her husband, did she lose her preoccupied air. Then she grew very sweet and very serious, and as she laid her hand in his and took the marriage vows upon her lips, there sprang into her eyes a light at once so fearless and so appealing that Lavinia and Janet turned away their heads as if they had unwittingly drawn aside the veil of a sanctuary.

When it was over, and Lavinia and Janet had set their names as witnesses to the certificate, the wine and the borrowed fruit-cake appeared. The bride was by this time self-possessed and even gay.

"Just see, Ned," she exclaimed, "what I have to start housekeeping with — a dozen kinds of flower seeds. That's not exactly practical, I admit, but still it's something."

Her husband smiled, but he looked grave also.

"Thank you, Miss Clendenin," he said. "I am grateful for everything that makes it easier for her, for she is going into a strange land."

"Yes," she replied thoughtfully, "that is true. You are taking her into a strange land."

The bride turned to her with eyes that showed perfect comprehension, and her own returned the look. It was not Africa of which they were either of them thinking.

Janet stood at the window and watched the pair as they drove down the lane, her defiant head a little higher than usual. Her face was flushed, her eyes very bright, and her lips were scornful as al-

ways when she was moved and afraid of betraying it.

"A little thing like that," she exclaimed, "to go away off to that outlandish place with a strange man."

"He isn't a strange man," returned Lavinia, smiling. "He's her husband."

"That makes it all the worse. This marrying business is more than I can understand. What possesses a girl to leave a good home and go off to the ends of the earth just because some man wants her to — well, that gets me."

Lavinia swept her face with sudden keen inquiry. What was it that had so vivified Janet of late? Her many admirers she still treated with her old impartial frankness, much to the amusement of George Wallichner, who on his increasingly frequent visits to the parsonage addressed her as "My Lady Disdain."

But there was a something in Janet's face that led one to suspect that she understood perfectly what possesses a woman to follow where a man leads. Before Lavinia, however, could say anything, Janet had concluded,

"But if I ever *should* do such a fool thing as get married myself, I'd want to do it just this way — gulp it down with my eyes shut like a dose of castor oil."

CHAPTER XIV

THE APPROACHING CLOUD

The three strangers were at last identified. They were promoters of a new cement company, and had visited Peter Wallichner, the largest land owner in the vicinity, with a view to purchasing from him a site. And there was a rumor, persistent though untraceable, to the effect that Peter had agreed to sell the farm on which he lived, and that immediately upon the transference of the property, the old house so long used as a parsonage was to be torn down.

Mr. Clendenin, upon hearing the report, was serenely incredulous.

"This is some foolish gossip," he said, and returned to a sprightly work upon the Pelagian heresy.

Still there was a meeting of session called at the parsonage to discuss the matter.

"It is preposterous," announced David Walker. He looked out through the window as he spoke, where the fields swelled softly green, then dipped again toward the stream which caught the sunlight from the western sky. He tried to picture the land desolated by the manufacturer, its greenness tram-

78961B

pled into bleak grey dust, its peace made hideous by the incessant clatter of machinery. "I am amazed," he said, "that Wallichner could think of such a thing."

"I'm not," returned Samuel Boyd quietly. "He can move somewhere else. This place is nothing to him. He — he — isn't one of us."

The minister nodded sharply, and silence fell. It was an old story, this subtle barrier which so often reared itself between the closest neighbors. Scotch-Irish and Pennsylvania German, they had settled in the early days upon a new land, and now after generations of intercourse they remained, in the intangible things of life, as far apart as ever. Though their farms lay side by side, and the same sun beat upon them both as they labored in their fields, they could not in the deepest sense speak each other's language.

Of course if the rumor should prove to be well-grounded, there was but one thing to do, ungracious though it might seem — namely, to produce that contract signed so many years before in Timothy Hayes's office, in which Peter had agreed not to dispossess the minister and, as David Walker said, "hold him to it."

When the meeting was over Mr. Clendenin stood alone in the doorway. The darkness of an approaching summer storm settled around him, but there was no rain. The birds twittered in the tall maples over his head. For how many years, even generations, had the birds twittered in these same

trees. He tried to picture the place laid bare to the skies, with only glaring stumps to show where trees once stood.

It would be a task to remove the roots, he deliberated. They ran, to his knowledge, as far as the gate. And then there formed in his mind a dim parallel — dim because, for a scholar, he was singularly lacking in imagination. He wondered how deep struck those other roots — the roots of human lives.

As he turned to re-enter the house, he ran his hand over the crumbling grey stones of which it was built. What a pile they would make — those stones — if the house were torn quite down.

In the study the shadows were piled high, almost as high as on the night when Lavinia had braved the ghastly moonlight to comfort her brother. The minister groped his way through them unsteadily. Then he consoled himself by drawing one book after another from the shelves. He peered at their titles with difficulty through the gloom. But the mere touching of them reassured him. They were the most familiar things in his life, and the most real. His face brightened. Of course this threatening cloud like the one now dissipating in the sky outside would pass and not break in storm upon his head.

The ensuing week, however, brought a disquieting discovery. Peter Wallichner's agreement could not be found. The church records at the bank were examined in vain. The act of incor-

poration with Governor Mifflin's majestic signature and many other documents of value were there, but not the one they sought.

The minister even searched laboriously among the papers in his study. "Though I remember," he objected, "that I returned all records pertaining to the sale of the property to the bank myself the next day."

There was, however, another possibility. It might have been placed, along with certain papers of historic interest, among the records of Presbytery, in which case it must surely come to light at the approaching meeting of that body, to be held, by good fortune, a few days later in the Settlement.

Lavinia, when the day arrived, wakened early, not only because of her interest in the result of the search, but also for the very practical reasons that her father must be inveigled into a presentable coat and started to the meeting in time, and later the more distant visiting ministers must be entertained at supper.

The morning was given up to preparation. Chickens were killed, the silver was polished, and by the time the noon meal was over, little remained to be done but the actual cooking of the supper when the hour should arrive.

Janet put kitchen and dining-room into spotless order and went to her room. Lavinia, weary from her early waking and the fatigue of the morning, dropped upon the couch by her window and hoped

to sleep. But for a long time sleep would not come. One thought filled her mind — David.

If the place were sold, then all her years of waiting were in vain. "If I could see it just once as it used to be — I who can never come back." And her answer had been that he could — he must — come back. For the place was still the same. And that just as the setting of his life remained unchanged, so the promise and the purpose of that life remained unchanged also. All that he might have been he still could be.

But she could prove it to him only here. By the never-pausing rhythm of seed-time and harvest, by the ever-springing life of tree and flower, by the strength and beauty of the steadfast hills — this was her litany.

And in that day toward which she looked, he would listen and believe, here in the old house where she had parted from him on a September night quivering with the call of insects and redolent of lilies blooming white and sweet beyond their time. Then she fell asleep.

And meanwhile down the dusty road came ministers driving to the church. One of them pointed out the parsonage to a young man about to be ordained; rehearsing the part which its Revolutionary occupant had played; explaining how after the fall of Fort Washington when immediate action was necessary to prevent the capture of Philadelphia, an express rider brought the order to commanders of militia to be ready to march

at an hour's notice; how the pastor assembled his people, depleted already by their contribution to the Flying Camp, and read to them the call; how they responded instantly, demanding only that he lead them; how his will, written that night, bequeathed his wife and children to the protection, mercy, and grace of that God from whom he had received them.

He even located the spot where the next morning the patriot pastor joined his people and parted from his oldest child, a boy of nine, lifting him from his grey horse, kissing him, and sending him back to be the support of his mother and the younger children.

And he quoted from that last letter written to the heroic wife on the eve of the battle of Trenton at which the minister was killed, and still preserved in the Settlement, blotted with her tears. Then they reached the churchyard and followed their fellow-presbyters into the meeting.

The session was brief, but after its adjournment there was much discussion of the threatened sale of the land associated so long and so closely with the history of the church. That such a sale would ever take place was regarded as unlikely, first, because when questioned about it Peter Wallichner had dismissed the subject with a laugh; second, because it was only necessary, if he should be tempted to sell, to produce his agreement to the contrary and, as David Walker said, "hold him to it."

This document, to be sure, was not yet in hand, but it was by this time believed to be among the private papers of the Treasurer of the Presbytery, who was now in the mountains for his health, and would return in September. Having reached this conclusion, the assemblage dispersed.

CHAPTER XV

JANET VANQUISHED

Lavinia wakened suddenly. It was four o'clock. She hurried into her cool lawn gown and went downstairs. She sought the kitchen to consult with Janet. But Janet was not there.

On into the garden she followed in search of her. But the garden, too, was deserted. The four o'clocks smiled up at her; an errant breeze stirred the leaves of the old apple tree, then came nearer, shook the coral honeysuckle and drenched the air with sweetness; a bee buzzed industriously among the purple heliotrope; then silence fell — the golden silence of a summer afternoon. It was as though heaven itself at the summit of the day had stopped to bestow with outstretched hand a benediction of peace.

But she paused for a moment only, then turned again into the clean, wide kitchen. This was most extraordinary of Janet. She climbed the steps to the girl's room. The bed she found untouched; upon the door hung Janet's morning dress; upon the bureau lay a crumpled handkerchief; but there was no Janet.

She descended the stairs in vexation. Janet

had gone over to her mother's. Putting on a fresh white apron which she found behind the door, she went to the stove and opened the draughts. A confusion of voices warned her that her guests had arrived. Slipping out through the garden, she ran across the meadow to Sarah McPherson.

"Is Janet here?" she inquired.

"Janet? Why, no, I haven't seen her today."

"Then I can't imagine where she is. And here I am with all these ministers for supper."

"Ministers! Oh, to be sure. Well, I'll go right back with you myself. Is everything ready to cook? They'll be hungry as anything, if they do have heavenly minds."

Two hours later Lavinia was presiding at her table, very gracious but a little flushed, while Sarah McPherson came and went with fresh supplies of fried chicken and hot rolls. But it was not until the last visitor had disappeared down the lane that she and Mrs. McPherson found a moment for conversation. Then over the steaming dishpan, while Sarah assailed the mounds of waiting china and Lavinia briskly wielded a towel, they attacked the mystery of the afternoon; for Janet was still missing.

A sharp knock took Lavinia to the door, but Sarah, listening, could hear only a jumble of broken English. It was one of the Wallichner girls talking. She knew the voice. Lavinia came back as white as the towel she was holding.

"Mrs. McPherson," she said, "Janet and George Wallichner were married this afternoon at the Lutheran parsonage."

"Married!" And the plate she was holding slipped from her fingers into the water with a splash. She sat down weakly, wiping her hands with a corner of her apron. "Married, and without a word to anybody. And yet"— in unconquerable honesty —"it's just what her mother did before her."

"Lavinia," she asked suddenly, "did she take any clothes with her?"

"I don't know."

"What did she wear?"

"I don't know."

"Well, we'll soon find out."

Together they went to Janet's room. No corner but was ransacked by her bewildered but increasingly indignant mother.

"Well," she concluded, "as near as I can make out, she didn't take a stitch of anything with her but her new blue dress that she wore."

"I guess that's so," replied Lavinia vaguely. She was fingering Janet's gingham morning dress as she spoke. It hung in such familiar folds, one almost saw her saucy face above it.

"So she'll be back tonight."

"I hope so," responded Lavinia, but her tone was doubtful.

"You *hope* so. Why she'll have to come back.

You never heard of anybody going on a trip, did you, without any clothes?"

"I don't know," persisted Lavinia. Her bewilderment was so great that she felt she could never again know anything positively.

"Well," reiterated Mrs. McPherson, "you mark my words. She'll be back tonight. And when she does come, she'll hear from me."

But Janet did not return that night, nor the next, nor the next. Indeed it was almost two weeks before she appeared, coming up the walk to the door — alone.

Lavinia saw her from an upstairs window. She found her standing in the middle of the hall waiting to see what her reception would be. She was a very shamefaced, yet a very radiant Janet. It was her hesitation — so unlike her — that made Lavinia smile.

"Janet, you rascal," she cried, "have you come back at last?"

Janet's searching eyes twinkled and she broke into a laugh.

"Miss Lavinia," she pleaded, "will you ever forgive me?"

For answer Lavinia took her into her arms and kissed her.

"I suppose we'll have to forgive you," she said, "inasmuch as women have been doing this thing ever since the days of Adam and Eve.

"But my dear," she urged, "why didn't you

tell me about it beforehand? Don't you know I would have given you a wedding here?"

Janet's face grew grave.

"I know you would," she said, "but I couldn't talk about this — to anybody, not even to you. Besides, don't you remember I warned you that if I ever did get married, I'd have it over at one gulp like a dose of medicine?"

"I believe," suggested Lavinia suspiciously, "that you had it all planned before that."

"No," replied Janet thoughtfully, "I didn't plan it until after that day. But I'll admit that *I* planned it and not George. *He* would have let the whole world know."

Lavinia nodded. It was hard to conceive of any circumstances under which Janet would not lead.

"I thought," continued the girl, "that the day of the meeting of Presbytery would be a good time, because I could slip away without being missed. And yet, do you know, George was determined to come here with me today to tell you it was his fault and not mine? He was so afraid you would blame me. But I wouldn't let him. I told him I had some things to say to you alone."

"I should think you would have some things to say to me, after leaving me with ten ministers to entertain for supper."

"Oh, Miss Lavinia, I've been so worried about that. Whatever did you do?"

"Well, *I* didn't do much of anything. Your mother came over and got the supper."

"Mother? Well, I'm glad *one* of the McPhersons had a shred of conscience. But I want you to know that I never in the world meant to leave you like that. When I went out of the door that day, I no more dreamed of not coming back to help you than I did of flying. Why I even hung a clean white apron in the kitchen the last thing so I wouldn't have to go upstairs when we got back.

"But that was just all I knew about it. When we started home again George took the back road, and when I asked him why, he said it was shorter. But I didn't suspect anything till we came to the cross-roads. There he deliberately turned the horse's head toward town.

"'George Wallichner,' I said, 'where on earth are you going?'

"'I'm going to town,' said he.

"'Well I'm not,' said I.

"'Aren't you?' said he. And he bit his lip in that quiet way he has when he's laughing over something inside.

"'Indeed I'm not,' I said. 'I'm going straight back to Miss Lavinia, as sure as my name is Janet McPherson.'

"'But it isn't any more, you know,' he said.

"Well, that took the breath out of me. I hadn't realized till that minute that I wasn't Janet

McPherson any more. So then I tried coaxing George. I said, 'I'll go anywhere in the world with you tomorrow, if you'll just let me go home now.'

"He didn't say a word, just touched up his horse and drove straight on.

"'You see,' I explained, 'I'm not ready. Why I haven't so much as an extra pocket-handkerchief with me.'

"'There are plenty of stores,' he answered. 'How many pocket-handkerchiefs do you think you'll need? I have heard of brides who used up half a dozen before the ceremony was over. But you're not exactly the weeping sort.'

"Of course I laughed then, for I'm certainly not the weeping sort, as you know. But still he persisted.

"'George,' I said, 'it isn't that I don't *want* to go with you, but I *can't*. I've got to go back to Miss Lavinia. She needs me.'

"'So do I need you,' he said, 'a great deal worse than she does.'

"'But,' I said, 'this isn't just an ordinary occasion, or she could get supper herself, of course. There are ten ministers there to feed, George. It's a meeting of Presbytery.'

"Well, then I guess he got a little mad. I didn't know before that he could. And he just said that Presbytery could go to — well, where Presbyteries don't generally aim to go.

"After that I gave up. You wouldn't have

known me, Miss Lavinia, riding along there with him, as meek as a little lamb. You never know beforehand what you'll do when you're married. You can brag all you're a mind to (And oh, what a fool I was), but afterward you find out. I suppose I'd have walked into the middle of the Atlantic ocean after him if he'd a wanted me to."

The color had flooded her face but her eyes were very tender. She was silent for the space of a breath and Lavinia, watching her, was almost startled to see her so transformed. Janet for the first time in all her saucy, lawless life was in the grasp of something that was bigger than she was.

"It's this way," she said slowly. "You don't belong to yourself any more. And the worst of it is you — you — don't want to."

She lifted her eyes bravely as she spoke. Her face was vivid with feeling. There was shame there, but back of the shame was a glory that transfigured it. Lavinia had the sense of facing the last veil which guarded the girl's heart, and held her breath lest it, too, fall and reveal that which she had no right to look upon.

"Janet," she interposed briskly, "where did you go?"

"Go? Oh, we went to New York, and then to Philadelphia, and of course — to — to — Washington."

"That was quite a trip. You must have seen a good deal."

"Oh, yes I suppose we did." Her mouth sud-

denly curled with mischief. "But if we had seen brass monkeys in blue coats walking on their heads, we wouldn't have known it.

"I suppose," she added thoughtfully, and there was again that tender light which she could not keep out of her eyes — I suppose we *were* in New York and Philadelphia and Washington, but I think all the time we've just been living in — in — heaven."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FAR COUNTRY

It was late afternoon and the African sunset near at hand when Mrs. Edward Blake approached the house which she now called home. The varied sights of a mining town, so novel and absorbing at first, turned suddenly repugnant to her. As she let herself into the house, she turned to the clock to count the minutes which must drip away before she could hope to hear her husband's step.

The past few weeks seemed like a dream, from that day at Cape Town when they had first set foot upon African soil to the present moment. The first expedition of white men in the seventeenth century, that little band which in October, the tender African springtime, had surprised young zebras playing on the hillsides, the rhinoceros rolling in the high grass, the hippopotamus wallowing in the water; the Great Trek of the nineteenth century, when the Dutch Boers had set out from Cape Colony in their low-bodied wagons across the wilderness to the Orange River; that horde of fortune-seekers who later crossed the Great Karroo when diamonds were first discovered, Scotchmen recalling, in the shrubs with which its

great brown face was purpled, the heather of their own Highlands, or Englishmen who wandered far in the furze to pick the little yellow flowers that reminded them of the gorse at home; — all these she had learned to know.

But when they reached the mining-town where they were to be settled, the contrast between the substantial houses of the Europeans and the compounds where the natives swarmed pressed home to her the strangeness of this new life. Here was European civilization planted, an exotic, upon alien shores. Along avenues of trees one passed many a beautiful residence overhung with vines which in summer would transform it into a paradise, to come the next moment upon a group of ebony Kafirs gambling in the street.

Tonight, with the chill of sunset upon her, she could only think as she sat there listening for a footstep at the door, of the blue leagues of ocean rolling between this busy, glaring town and America. She remembered the brick schoolhouse where she used to go to school with her sisters; she remembered her mother, standing at the door of their home with a little white shawl about her shoulders; but she remembered quite as vividly the Settlement and Lavinia Clendenin's garden.

Suddenly she rose with determination. What was it Miss Clendenin had said about women needing comfort? Well she would comfort herself and not lean too hard upon Ned, who was a man and

strong — and, perhaps, would not understand.

To that end she began unpacking a box of books. They at least would seem homelike, and she had been too long already about settling these rooms which were now to be their home. She had ranged perhaps a half dozen of the books upon the shelf when she came upon an envelope bearing Lavinia Clendenin's name. Ah, here they were, those packets of flower seeds she had stored so carefully among the few possessions they had brought with them. Tossing the envelope upon the table among the books she spread the tiny parcels out upon her knee. How well she remembered labeling them as Miss Clendenin drew them out of the old blue teapot away back there in Pennsylvania.

The whole scene of her wedding day rose before her mind. She could see the minister, tall and gaunt and forbidding, and his daughter, tall also, but with deep and searching eyes and very gentle. It seemed to her that she could fairly smell the mignonette and roses in the old garden. Yes, here, too, she must have mignonette and roses, and a home. It could hardly be too soon to start a garden now, for though at daybreak the white frost covered the ground, and vessels of water exposed to the outside air were skimmed with ice, still by noon the climbing sun had dispelled even these traces of winter, and in the high, pure, plateau atmosphere the town basked in the warmth and brilliance of an almost tropical climate.

So absorbed was she in designing her possible garden, she forgot to listen for the footsteps until the door opened and her husband was at her side. Together they went out to dinner and made gay plans for the time when their experimental housekeeping should become stable enough to permit them to take their meals at home. Then there was talk of affairs at the mine, and she listened while her husband told her of the swarms of natives underground, and of the mechanics who were under his direct control.

"By the way," he said, "the superintendent left today. That makes it hard on us new fellows. No head, practically, and his successor doesn't come till next week."

"Why did he leave?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's a queer Dick. He's lived all over the world, held very responsible positions, too. But he gets tired every time and wants to move on."

"Has he a family?"

"No, thank heaven. Such men do not deserve to have."

"What do you mean?" His wife's clear eyes were fastened on his face.

"Oh, nothing." And he retreated hastily. "I was only thinking that his propensity for knocking about the universe would be pretty hard on a family, if he had one."

"Where's he going now?"

"I don't know. But, my dear, he's going to

stop at the house this evening with some papers I need to have. I've an errand down the street and if he comes while I'm gone, you can talk to him until I get back."

Mrs. Blake had hardly gotten her hat off before he came. But it was not until he was seated that she remembered she did not know his name. Then she was ashamed to ask.

"We're just getting settled," she began volubly. "I didn't unpack our books until today, and I haven't gotten them into place yet."

"Let me help you," he suggested, and began at once to range them on the shelves with swift movements of his strong brown hands. "That is," he added, "if you can trust me. I'm more used to machinery than books."

"But you have to study books to understand machinery. And perhaps you like the books best."

He smiled gravely.

"No" he returned, "I don't. I never liked books. When I was a boy, my father made me study the classics. I've never looked at them since."

"Is your father living?"

His eyes fell.

"I — I — don't know," he replied.

Then he fumbled among the books until he found a familiar title. He lifted the volume and opened it. "The Odes of Horace," he repeated. "How many years since I've even seen the name."

"My husband says," she ventured, "that that's a queer book for an engineer to have in his library. But he likes them, especially this translation. He sometimes reads them aloud to me in the evenings."

"Does he ever read you this one?" He had turned to the Ode to Leuconoe.

"Yes," she answered; "and I like it. It means so much."

He glanced at her as she settled herself in her chair, her serious blue eyes fixed on his face, and he began to read as if to himself:

"'Oh, do not seek to learn, Leuconoe,
What fate the Gods reserve for you or me!
'Tis wrong; nor call in Babylonian seers
By mystic numbers to forecast your years.
Better endure what Jupiter ordains,
And not inquire how much of life remains;
Perhaps more winters — this our last may be,
Grinding the rocks that curb the Tyrrhene sea.
Filter your wine, be wise, there's little scope
In a short life to cherish distant hope;
Even while we speak, Time, envious, slips away;
Incredulous of the morrow,— pluck today.'"

His voice deepened as he read. He became dignified — and sad. And when silence fell upon his last words, the girl in her chair, breathless, feared to break it. What kind of man was this, who claimed to dislike books, and yet knew Horace like a scholar?

"Ah, yes," he said at last, "that is very true."

And he sighed. "Surely there is little scope in a short life to cherish distant hope."

He laid the book upon the table, and as he did so, an envelope beside it fell to the floor. It was the one which had carried flower seeds from Lavinina Clendenin's garden. He stooped to replace it, but paused midway and stared like one fascinated. Mrs. Blake watched him in a tumult of curiosity. She saw the muscles grow tense in his face; she saw the color die beneath his tan; and then he looked up with eyes that had both fear and hope in them.

"Do you know this Lavinia Clendenin?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed, I spent an hour with her in June — in her garden. It was a quaint place, with roses and honey-suckle climbing all about, and little low flowers like portulaca and London pride and sweet alyssum running everywhere. And she gave me seeds of them to bring with me to Africa. But where did you ever meet her? Were you ever in America?"

"Yes, years ago. I have been in that garden myself as a boy."

"Are you American born?"

"I have lived," he replied evasively, "in a great many places. But tell me about this Lavinia Clendenin. She is not married, I see. Does she live there alone?"

"She lives with her father."

"Then he is still living?"

"He is indeed. I shall never forget Mr. Clendenin. It was he who married us. How many years ago was it that you were there?"

Before he could answer the door opened and a riot of laughing voices announced Mr. Blake and a trio of callers. At another time she would have welcomed them, but at the moment she felt defrauded. The superintendent rose and with a few words to Mr. Blake left the house.

For two hours Mrs. Blake discussed the voyage and her impressions of Africa with her guests, and she gave no sign of flagging interest or cordiality. But the instant the door had closed behind them she turned to her husband imperiously.

"Ned," she demanded. "I must know more about that man. You said something queer about him at dinner. Is he — is he — *bad?*"

Mr. Edward Blake tried hard not to smile before those earnest blue eyes looking up at him, eyes which had already seen too much of the lawless living of men in mining towns.

"Well," he temporized, "these people who drift around the world with no ties anywhere are never very good, you know. I should say he was as good as the average — and as bad."

"He drinks, I suppose."

"I suppose so. They all do, more or less."

"And so he has had to leave."

"My dear child"— and this time he did smile —"you mustn't suppose that has anything to do with it. Mining companies know nothing and care

nothing about a man's morals. They employ whoever can run the business most profitably. So far as I know, he has been a thoroughly competent superintendent. He is leaving, I think, entirely of his own accord. But I wish you'd tell me, my child, why you are taking such a violent interest in him?"

"Interest in him," she flashed. "Oh, I forgot. You don't know yet. Why, Ned, that man's an American. He's been at the Settlement. He knows the very minister that married us. He's even been in that garden where my flower seeds came from, and he knows Miss Clendenin."

Her husband gave an astonished whistle.

"He *does?*" he said.

"Yes. And I wanted to talk to him some more. I wanted to know how long it was since he'd been at the Settlement. Do you know when I think of that peaceful place and remember that he came from there, it just seems as if he couldn't be really — bad. And now he's gone and I didn't even ask his name."

It was Mr. Blake's turn to look very, very serious. "His name," he said slowly, "is Richard Clendenin."

. . . . . .

There were broad and hospitable houses on either side of the wide streets, and from their windows streamed out the radiance of evening lamps. There were happy groups of men and women —

of children, too, within these homes. And Richard Clendenin, tramping steadily on between the rows of eucalyptus and pepper trees, knew it with the keenness possible only to the homeless. He did not stop until he had left the town behind and had come out upon the spacious rolling veld.

He had learned to know this land intimately. He knew the luxuriance of the coast with its huge and feathery tree ferns, its clinging festoons of vines, its pure sweet clusters of mystacidium, and its orchids. He knew, too, the wilderness of the table lands of the interior, the mountain peaks and gorges, and those terraces upon which grew the wild chestnut, the Natal mahogany, the white pear, and the ironwood.

But he liked best the broad veld, dotted here and there with Boer farmhouses. Here grew figs, pomegranates, oranges, and grapes, luscious in their season; here white flocks grazed upon the pasture lands, and black and red cattle were scattered over the fields; here wild ducks, plover, and sandgrouse haunted the thickets, and the blue-grey Kafir cranes stalked along the pools; and here in the spring time, when the flowers wove a garment of beauty for the earth, little dusky black and white birds sang a song that reminded him of the linnets he had learned to love in England.

But tonight there was neither beauty nor song to beguile him. The expanse of the veld stretched on before him, black and limitless under the cold night skies. A bitter wind sprang up and lashed

him, but he bent his head and pushed on, not pausing until midnight found him far away from town and farmhouse, alone beneath the African stars.

And here, alone and homeless, memory came and took him by the hand. Obedient he traveled back across the years, through shifting scenes of light and shadow, some of them so dark that at the mere thought of them the latent manhood in him cringed with shame, until he came at last to a child standing, innocent, beside his mother's grave.

It seemed to him that he could see the garden as it was that day when they had returned to it, he and Lavinia together, racing among the prim paths to shake off the gloom which had possessed them during their three days of mourning. He could see the late asters that clothed the beds with royal purple; he could feel the mild September air that sharpened at sunset; and through the African midnight there came the scent of honeysuckle blown across the years.

A surge of homesickness such as he had never known before overwhelmed him. Could he go back? Hitherto, at every turn of fortune he had gone, in spirit, farther away from home. Now he had reached the end. He seemed to stand upon the shore of some illimitable sea where he must either turn back, or be lost. And yet pride held him fast. He could not forget that bitter night when he had watched the hours through with only dead books for company. How he had hated

those books! And now the tramping years had almost obliterated the very name of Horace from his mind.

Suddenly, and with an accuracy of memory that startled him, came back the words he had read that evening:

> " Perhaps more winters — this our last may be,
> Grinding the rocks that curb the Tyrrhene sea;
> Filter your wine; be wise; there's little scope
> In a short life to cherish distant hope.
> Even while we speak, Time, envious, slips away;
> Incredulous of the morrow,— pluck today! "

It was as if he heard a physical voice calling him. And with that quick imagination which was so much a part of him, he almost smiled to think that if it were Horace who had driven him from home, it was Horace who now called him back. A sense of haste possessed him. If he were ever going back it must be now. And there was no moment to lose. The *carpe diem* of the poet became no longer a voice, but a lash to urge him on.

And yet when he turned his face toward the town again, he had made his decision in the phrase of a book much stranger to him than Horace: for he had said,

" I will arise and go unto my father."

CHAPTER XVII

THE LOST DOCUMENT

September brought dismay to the Parsonage. For the new cement company was now an assured fact. By the end of the month its operations were to begin. Meanwhile the Treasurer of the Presbytery, back from the mountains, could find no trace of Peter Wallichner's agreement. As for Peter himself, though approached by every member of the session, he continued to present a veritable wall of silence. Admitting that even after years of intercourse with English speaking people he handled the language but clumsily, and was of necessity, therefore, among his neighbors a somewhat silent man, still in his present silence there was a something significant — something premeditated and sinister.

September was slipping away; there was no time to lose; yet it was manifestly impossible to bind a man to a scrap of paper which apparently did not exist.

"I'm afraid, Lavinia," said the minister, "the old house will have to go."

When Lavinia put out her light that night, she stood for a moment at the window where a glimmer of moonlight filtered through the pine trees

at the gate. Then she sought her bed reluctantly, apprehensive of a sleepless night. And indeed it seemed to her that she must not sleep until she had devised some plan to avert the calamity threatening their lives.

There is a stillness about the night which is unlike any daytime stillness. And in the stillness the spirit of darkness comes to brush aside all material things, so that one sees with a clarity of vision impossible in the confusion of the day, deep into the heart of things.

Tonight, watching the moon, she waited consciously for the spirit of darkness to lead her out into those peaceful paths which thread the expanse of the night. It reminded her — the moon — of the night she had pushed her way into the study and found Richard with the cold moonlight streaming over him. She wondered if the boy still lived, or if some remote corner of the earth contained a lonely grave.

At last the moon was setting behind the pine trees; a wandering breeze caressed the vines at the window; a distant night-owl sent its quivering cry into the air; and the spirit of darkness led her quietly across those tranquil meadows of the night whose mystery and beauty only the sleepless know.

It was past three o'clock when she lifted her head and leaned toward the open window that the sweet coolness which preceded the dawn might bathe her flushed face. She realized then that she had traveled far, for those who tread the path of

sleeplessness know that more than midway of the journey there comes a little hollow in the plains of night where one may rest awhile. Here sleep, if it comes at all, overtakes one, and here one begins to climb by a path both steep and short up to the day.

After what seemed but a moment she was startled as if from falling. Sleep had not quite captured her, but there had come a slight blurring of consciousness and she had lost her way. And yet with the sense of fright was mingled the sense of comfort, as if for a moment she had been enfolded by warm and human arms. But it was only the spirit of darkness covering her eyes with gentle hand in the hollow of the night.

A great wave of loneliness sent her to the window, where she stood, looking out. Not far away she could see the Walker home, a shadowy bulk in the dimness of dawn, and at one of the windows a light burned. This meant that Mr. Walker was away on his yearly journey and his wife was restless until he returned. Beside that light another woman was keeping vigil too. The thought brought her just the sense of companionship she needed, for since the world was belted with the signal fires of women who wait, she must be patient and hope, lest she lose her place among those who fulfill to the uttermost their womanhood.

Nearer at hand stood the Wallichner house, and there, too, a light burned. Ah, yes, she re-

membered, there was a baby sick there. As she thought of the tiny nestling thing, a rush of tenderness sent the tears to her eyes, through which she groped her way back to her bed to await the day with that deep patience which only women know whose arms are empty.

But in that instant came an illuminating thought,— George Wallichner. For in these recent months when she had seen him often with Janet, something like their early friendship had been re-established. And now she felt quite free with him, since in his perfect union with Janet she saw that he had reached that happiness which was the fitting crown of so worthy a life.

She would go, then, to George. He doubtless knew his father's intentions; he would at least understand the legal aspect of the case. Even at the risk of accusing to him his own father, she would go.

Arrived at the house in town where they had set up their bridal housekeeping, she found George in the act of setting out for his office, and Janet with him in the hall. He was astonished at her news. By a miracle he had heard nothing of the rumored sale of the land. And what concerned him most was the possibility of his father's breaking a contract once made, for while he knew him to be strictly honest, he knew him also to be a mere infant regarding legal matters.

"I'm glad you told me," he said. "I'll run out tomorrow and find out about this."

"George," announced his wife as she stopped at his office some hours later, "I'm going home with Miss Lavinia. I don't know how long I'll have to stay, but I'm not coming back until that lost paper is found. No, you needn't look at me that way. I haven't gone crazy at all. But I believe that paper is somewhere in that house. Mr. Clendenin had charge of it, and he's absentminded enough to lose his head. Do you remember the day you helped me clean his study? Well, I'm inclined to think you could lose a house and lot in that room, and —"

"Not coming back until that paper is found!" cried her husband in dismay. "Then the only thing for me is to institute proceedings for divorce on the ground of desertion."

"You great big goose," she returned, laughing. Then, "Good-bye, Mr. Wallichner"— she had reached the door and had put on an air of great formality —"when you come to the Settlement, call and see us." But he caught her before she could escape, and she ran down the hall blushing still from his last kiss.

Promptly the next day George Wallichner arrived at his father's house, but after an hour's interview he came away no wiser than before. Nothing could have been more exasperating than the old man's persistent, good-humored refusal to discuss the matter. George finally turned and strode out of the house, beautiful in his anger as a young Greek god. His father watched him with

a queer look on his face, then turned to his wife and chuckled. The two of them dropped into their chairs and fairly shook with laughter.

George meanwhile entered the parsonage gate and reached the study, where Mr. Clendenin in dressing-gown and slippers, received him with some surprise. But pushing two commentaries and a Greek Testament from a chair and removing the pipe from his mouth, he made him welcome.

The signing of the contract and its subsequent loss were then investigated. But George Wallichner, sitting there asking keen questions, could not know that he had opened an old wound, that to the minister the windows seemed darkened again by a wild rain, the path to the village trodden again by searching feet, and that the whole desolation of that April morning so long ago had again overwhelmed him.

"Well, in case the contract cannot be found," concluded George, "the thing to do is to prove its contents by means of witnesses. It is always permissible, though I grant you difficult, to establish a lost instrument by oral proof of what it contained."

The minister listened dully. These legal matters were so much Choctaw to him.

"Perhaps it might be possible," pursued the lawyer, "to get some information from Mr. Hayes who drew up the agreement."

But Timothy Hayes was by this time a querulous invalid with mental faculties weakened by dis-

ease. When interrogated, he gazed at the young man blankly, shuffling his feet upon his faded ottoman, while intelligence barely flickered in his haggard face.

Others who were questioned remembered perfectly the contents of the paper, the only difficulty being that each remembered differently, so that the lawyer found himself finally possessed of such a variety of information that all of it was useless.

The scene of that April day became very familiar to him; even the deaf old lady from Boston he now numbered among his intimates; but the contents of the paper signed then was still vague. And while the paper itself remained persistently lost, Peter Wallichner traveled placidly up and down the lane, and held the situation in the palm of his work-hardened hand.

CHAPTER XVIII

SWEET FIELDS BEYOND

Aunt Peggy Craig was sitting by the deep, square-paned window of her house, looking down the lane. She had sat there for so many years now that people had come to regard her as one of the features of the landscape, as one saw at other windows a pot of flowers, perhaps. Even her two nieces, who lived in the big house at the foot of the lane and came every day to see her, watched over her less as a woman than as some tender plant whom the frost might chill.

A flower — that was what she most resembled, with her slender, erect body in its rustling silk, and her sweet old face framed in snow-white curls — a flower blooming in a spot so sheltered from the mad winds of progress and so warmed by love that the frost of age had not touched her. She would still diffuse the fragrance of springtime when the Reaper should come at last to level what the frost had left untouched.

She had watched for him much of late — the Reaper — but He had not come. It was on her eighty-fifth birthday that she had begun to watch, telling them that it could not be long now. And

yet the circling sun had brought the apple-blossoms to embower her house, the long still days of summer, the autumn grandeur of crimson and gold, and the blinding radiance of the snow, and still He had not come. Could it be, she wondered whimsically, that He had forgotten her? It seemed to her this September day, as she sat beside her window and looked down the lane, that before another year should change the fields from green to yellow, He must come.

There were four occasions by which Aunt Peggy reckoned the seasons. These were Sacrament Sundays. It was years since she had followed the road to the village and sat among the worshippers in the church, but each time that the occasion approached, the minister had come and had administered the sacrament to her in her home.

She was waiting for him now, and presently she saw him coming past the big house at the foot of the lane and up the walk to her door. He looked bent and old as he came into the room, and yet to her eyes he was still a youth. She remembered the day well when he had come, fresh from Edinburgh, and preached his first sermon in the church.

"Well, James," she said, "I'm still here." Aunt Peggy was the only person in the Settlement who called the minister by his first name. But for her one would never have known that he possessed one.

"And will be, I hope, for many a year to come," he replied.

"Many a year? Now, James, that's not a kind wish. Why should you want to keep me here when I can feel the very waves of the river rippling about my feet. Which one of the elders is coming to be with you today?"

"David Walker."

"He's a good man. But," with a laugh, "he'll be late. He always is. We'll have plenty of time to talk."

"Do you know," she continued, "I've been thinking a good deal today. I hope this is the last time you'll have to come. Not that I don't love this world. Dear me, this world is such an interesting place that I hardly have time to sleep. You see, I know every horse that goes past the foot of the lane, and I can generally tell who's inside the carriage and where they are going. And then right here in this yard there are the birds. The robins get married and go to housekeeping every year just outside my window. I wonder how many bird families I've watched these last ten years.

"I have such things all the time beside the extra things that happen. Why, this week I've had callers every day, to say nothing of a new baby being born down at the next farmhouse. No, I'm not tired of this world, but yet I know it could get along just as well without me, and I'm — I'm — *homesick*."

James Clendenin stared out of the window in silence.

"Yes," he said at length, "I am too. I've had nothing but trouble"— and his voice was bitter —"nothing but trouble from first to last."

Aunt Peggy's bright eyes grew soft.

"How many years is it, James," she said, "since your Mary went?"

"Twenty-eight. Twenty-eight years today since I buried her. And twenty years since Richard left me. And now the very house they lived in is to be torn down."

"But you still have Lavinia."

"Lavinia? Oh, yes, of course." And he brushed the thought aside. Why should he not have Lavinia? She was the one person in his life whom he had always taken for granted.

"And I," Aunt Peggy reminded him, "have no one of my very own. That's why I'm in such a hurry to go. My family are all there, and I think they must need me. I often think of that country — for it is a country, James, and not a city. Do you remember a sermon you preached once about the new Jerusalem? I never forgave you that sermon. It was dreadful. There was nothing in it but glitter, and how many cubits high the walls were. As if anybody could breathe inside of four walls.

"And then you said the streets were of gold brighter than any earthly gold ever mined. Could you stand that after resting your eyes for a lifetime on these fields of ours? You'd be so dazzled you'd go blind. And the hardness of them!

Why, once I went to Philadelphia and stayed all winter, and do you know, my feet were blistered — actually blistered — from the pavements there? I was never so glad as when spring came and I could come back to the good brown earth under my feet and the velvet of the grass, with crocuses and violets pushing through. Now if I couldn't stand it to walk on pavements for one winter here on earth, do you suppose I'd want to keep it up to all eternity? And gold crowns, too! Now just stop and think, James. How *would* you and I look with gold crowns on our heads?

"No; heaven is not splendor to me, heaven is peace. I look out sometimes down the lane and across the creek to where those fields stretch on and on to meet the sky, and I think how the 'sweet fields beyond the swelling flood stand dressed in living green.' If heaven is any different from that, then I don't want to go there."

She was silent for a moment gazing out of the window. Then she went on softly:

> "'There everlasting spring abides,
> And never-withering flowers;
> Death, like a narrow sea, divides
> This heav'nly land from ours.'

"James," she asked suddenly, "do you believe that people grow up in heaven? Now don't be thinking up the opinion of the ancient fathers. I don't want any theology. I don't believe in theology anyhow. It mixes me up so in my re-

ligion. But I often think of my two babies. Why, if they were grown up, they wouldn't need their mother any more. And I'm sure they do need me. And yet I always think of them as big enough to walk. I can shut my eyes and see them now, coming to meet me, Hugh, my husband, leading the children by the hand. They come over the green hillside in the cool stillness that follows the sunset. There are flowers in their hands and flowers at their feet. And when they see me, they hurry, the children running to keep up, until at last I have them in my arms.

"That will be heaven enough for me, James — at least just at first. It may sound wicked, but I think for a while I couldn't *hold* anything more. Just to have Hugh and the two little babies I nursed at these breasts." She turned quickly and listened. "There," she said, "is David Walker. He must have come the back way across the field."

When Sunday morning came, Mr. Clendenin did not preach the sermon he had at first prepared. And throughout the sermon which he did preach, the Latin fathers were conspicuously absent.

The minister was not like himself that day, so his people said afterward. And yet those who could remember him in the earlier days thought that he was like the self he might have been but for the trials which had embittered his life. But whatever the congregation may have thought of the minister, they agreed that it was an impressive service. The air was mild, and the windows stood

open to the September breeze, which wandered in and touched the snowy covering of the Communion table.

As for the sermon itself, not many of those present could remember the substance of it afterward. Unlike the sermons they had listened to Sunday after Sunday, it had so little body, but it had much soul. It concerned communion between the human and the divine, it emphasized the unity of all life, and it obliterated death as a barrier between time and eternity. Its text was: "He shall go no more out."

And when at the close of the sermon the minister announced the hymn: "There is a land of pure delight," no one felt it to be incongruous. They sang the whole hymn through, but after the first verse the minister did not join them. He sat gazing out through the open window where the late flowers, touched already by the frost, laid a last offering of sweetness upon the air. He was thinking of that country where "everlasting spring abides, and never-withering flowers."

As far as the eye could reach stretched the familiar farming land which had been the setting of his life. Here were brown fields, mellow under the autumn sunshine; here were shocks of corn marching on in yellow ranks; and here were great patches of stubble, showing how the reaping season had left the earth bared to the September skies. But here were also fields of tender wheat, soft as velvet and vivid to the eye. They would sleep soon

beneath the snow until springtime should again lead nature up the hill toward the harvest time.

It was upon them that his eye lingered. "Sweet fields," sang the congregation, "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood, stand dressed in living green." Were they not the symbol, those vital fields of green, of that endless persistence of life which we call immortality?

The congregation scattered to their homes to spend the remainder of the day in that quiet which was their habit. But even the seclusion of the Sabbath did not prevent the news from travelling throughout the afternoon that the minister was ill. One and another had seen the doctor's carriage pass, and it was soon known that Mr. Clendenin had suffered some sort of attack shortly after dinner, and that Lavinia was keeping him in bed.

Sarah McPherson had come over at once, and Janet, fortunately, was still there. So Lavinia could only decline gratefully the offers of help which followed in rapid succession. It was his heart, she explained to those who came, and not necessarily serious, although the doctor wanted him kept quiet for a day or so.

To keep Mr. Clendenin quiet was a task only to be appreciated by those who had lived in the same house with him, although the doctor, with that keenness of perception which belongs to the profession, foresaw that it would be difficult.

"Now, Dominie, see here," he said, "you've been

laying down the law to other people for the last forty years; this time it's my turn. You do just what I say, or you can't preach next Sunday. You stay here in bed and let your family wait on you."

The minister looked up at him determinedly.

"I'll just slip my clothes on," he said, "and go down to the easy chair in my study. It's lighter there and — pleasanter for reading."

"I didn't say the easy chair in your study or any other kind of chair. I said you were to stay in bed."

The patient turned fretfully upon his pillow.

"I'm not sick," he declared. "I did have something of a turn just after dinner, but I'm all right now."

"And we want you to stay all right, so you do as I say." And the doctor turned and left the room.

"I believe," he said to Sarah McPherson in the hall, "that that man would get up out of his coffin and insist upon preaching his own funeral sermon."

"I know," responded Sarah; "he's very headstrong." And she sighed.

"Headstrong! He's perfectly incorrigible."

Then Sarah went back to the room to find that in her brief absence the minister had gotten out of bed and was fumbling with the shade at the window. Nor would he leave it until he had ad-

justed it to throw light upon a book he had gotten from the next room.

"Now, Mr. Clendenin," warned Sarah, "this won't do." And he went back to bed — but reluctantly.

It was Lavinia who came into the room next, but before she could say a word he sent her downstairs for a commentary on the Pentateuch. She was gone so long that he finally despatched Sarah in search of her. When they both returned, he was up again and stepping about the room.

"I'm just looking," he explained hastily, "for my spectacles. Ah, here they are." And he hurried back to bed apologetically.

"Where is that commentary?" he demanded next.

But they had neither of them been able to find it. Sarah, however, rising nobly to the occasion, thrust something else into his hand.

"Here," she said soothingly, "take this instead. It's — it's — a Bible."

"A Bible," he thundered, and slammed it down upon the chair beside him with unmistakable emphasis. "When I ask for a book," he said, "I want the book I ask for." And he turned his head upon the pillow and closed his eyes.

After that they did not leave him alone, except once just at supper-time. Sarah McPherson, deciding to spend the night, had gone home for a little while to look after her own domestic affairs,

and Lavinia was occupied in the living-room with a caller.

Janet, in the kitchen, prepared Mr. Clendenin's supper, and as she came through the dining-room into the hall, tray in hand, she was met by a surprising sight. Through the open study door she saw the minister gazing up and down the ranks of books, his loose slippers flapping against his heels as he paced along the shelves with his dressing-gown drawn tightly around his bare ankles.

He reached for the book he was seeking, and then at sight of Janet he turned and scuttled through the hall, hugging it under his arm like a forbidden toy. Janet hastened after him, but he outdistanced her, gained his room, and scampered into bed like a truant schoolboy.

"Miss Lavinia," announced Janet when the caller had left, "your father is eating his supper. If you want to go up after a while and get the tray, here is the key to his room. I've locked him in."

"You've locked him in!"

"Yes, and what's more, I've told him that if he gets out of bed again even once, I'll take all his books and lock *them* up and keep the key."

Lavinia laughed, but the tears came to her eyes too.

"Is it as bad as that?" she questioned.

Then she went upstairs and stepped softly into his room. He had finished his supper and was lying quiet, gazing out through the window across

the meadow where the sunset light still lingered. His eyes had the helpless look of a child's.

"Sweet fields," he whispered to himself, "sweet fields beyond."

CHAPTER XIX

FROM THE PAGES OF HORACE

By Tuesday Mr. Clendenin was able to be downstairs unchallenged. Since the recent frost the maple trees south of the house had turned to gold. Here Lavinia took his chair and placed it where the sunlight trickling through the branches should escape his book; for a high wind in the night had partly bared the boughs, revealing a delicate tracery of brown beneath the pink and yellow. The ground, strewn thickly with fallen leaves, responded to the slightest footfall with a whisper.

But if, led by these traces of autumn, one sought for further marks of her presence, they were lacking. The air was as mild as June, and through the clear atmosphere the mellow September sunshine fell lovingly upon the hardy English ivy, climbing green and beautiful upon the grey walls, and touched with glory the late grapes hanging purple upon their vines.

The minister sat and idly turned the leaves of a new book upon his knee. He had never concerned himself greatly with translations of his favorite author, but this one was perhaps worth going through. Beside him on the fallen leaves lay his own worn copy of the original.

" ' *Ibimus, ibimus,*' " he was saying to himself, " ' *utcomque, praecedes, supremum carpere iter comites parati.*' "

It was one of the odes to Mæcenas, that Roman statesman who is not better known as the confidant of Cæsar than as the friend of Horace.

" ' Yes, we shall go, shall go,' " read the minister, " ' hand linked in hand, the last sad road below.' "

And then he paused and looked off across the fields, the lonely old man whose life for years had known little other companionship than the companionship of books. From Mæcenas his mind went on to that little farm among the hills which was the statesman's gift to the poet. It is enshrined — that Sabine farm — in the heart of the world, and it takes but a glimpse of springtime to call up the memory of those meadows where the flocks " crop as they wander in happiest vagrance, the arbutus green and the sweet-scented thyme."

Mr. Clendenin, turning the leaves of his translation, read here and there such fragments as:

> " When, when shall I the country see,
> Its woodlands green — oh, when be free,
> With books of great old men, and sleep,
> And hours of dreamy ease, to creep
> Into oblivion sweet of life? "

And he felt a subtle kinship to the gentle, kindly man whose highest art, perhaps, has been the simple art of winning friends. One does not wonder

at those Roman nobles whose pride it was to be the companion of him whose father was a slave. Nor does one question the pleasure with which they left behind the pomp of Rome to drink with Horace beneath the oak and ilex leaves his "blue Falernian wine." He has been the intimate of men of every race, who wrote:

"One road, and to one bourne
We all are goaded. Late
Or soon will issue from the urn
Of unrelenting Fate
The lot that in yon bark exiles us all
To undiscovered shores, from which is no recall."

Mr. Clendenin glanced the book through, and then came back to that ode to Mæcenas in which the poet has imprisoned the essence of his charm. For it is his genius for companionship which has captured the world. "'*Ibimus, ibimus,*'" whispered the minister.

"'Yes, we shall go, shall go,
Hand linked in hand, where'er thou leadest, both
The last sad road below.'"

Lavinia and Janet, full of housekeeping concerns, had found a counterpane to mend, and had seated themselves also beneath the maple trees, but at a little distance from the minister so that their whispered conversation might not interrupt him. The glancing sunlight sent the shadows quivering across the mass of white spread upon their knees

as they worked with bent heads, setting exquisitely dainty stitches into the worn places of the fabric. Neither looked up, for both were absorbed in the delight of fine needlework which is inherent in all women.

At last Lavinia pushed her needle through the last stitch, and, clipping the thread, raised her head and looked about the yard. The sun was drooping toward the west; the shadows lay cool and long across the grass; the dusty road beyond wound on and on, dull and colorless under the waning light. But down the length of it there came a man walking. Lavinia watched him curiously.

On he came steadily and yet — as he drew nearer — with a certain deprecating air. Lavinia somehow could not take her eyes from him. And when he turned, pushed open the gate, came across the grass, and stood before them, she still watched him as if fascinated. No one of the group spoke a word. There seemed to be a spell upon them all.

But the stranger had eyes for only the old man in the big chair with his furrowed brow and his straggling white hair.

"Father," he said simply, "I have come back to finish my lesson."

Lavinia caught her breath sharply and sprang to her father's side. The shock of it, she thought — but she need not have feared. The minister rose — trembling a little — to his full height, and gazed deeply into his son's eyes. Then his face relaxed into a droll smile so unusual that Lavinia

felt as if she had witnessed some kind of an accident.

"Very well," he said, "'*Carpe diem*'— imperative mood — wasn't that where we stopped?"

Richard Clendenin straightened himself as if a load of years had suddenly dropped from his shoulders. Then he caught the lean old hand in his strong grasp, and both men laughed.

Lavinia drew a long breath of relief, but she felt dazed and shaken, and turned involuntarily to Janet for support. Janet, however, was not there. There was only the swish of her skirts and the click of a latch as she disappeared into the house. The three were alone together.

"Do you know," confided Janet to her husband some days later, "I was sure that was Richard Clendenin the minute I laid eyes on him. It isn't that he *looks* like Miss Lavinia exactly, and yet there's a something."

And Janet was right; for that which they possessed in common, the man whose career had been a storm-tossed vessel and the woman whose life was an altar from which rose daily the incense of sweetness and devotion, was not a physical but spiritual quality. It was an exquisite aptitude for suffering.

At the supper-table that night, Richard, grown man that he was, whose knowledge of the world belted the globe, felt curiously identified with the youth who had once from the darkness across the hall watched the light stream out from this very

room. It had meant to him that which alone can satisfy the demand of humanity — a home. And through all the years between he had been at heart a homesick boy. Lavinia, watching his face, felt it but little stranger than her father's, for upon the latter was something she had rarely seen there before — peace.

After supper Mr. Clendenin disappeared, to return with his Horace.

"Yes," said Richard, "I must finish that last line."

So they sat down, the three of them, and Richard searched the pages through to find only the marks which the knife had left.

Then Mr. Clendenin remembered.

"I cut the page out," he explained, "just as I wanted to cut out of my life the memory of — of — my harshness."

This was his apology, and Richard reached impulsively across the table and caught his hand.

"Thank you," he said.

"Richard," cried Lavinia, "your little chest! Your books are in that."

A moment later she and Janet were climbing the steps to the attic where the autumn wind rattled the shutters, where were quaint ancestral garments hanging, where the air was pungent with parsley, sage, and thyme. As they set the candle down, its flickering flame grew full and steady. Rising from its slender burnished candlestick, it might have been a flower blooming against the dusk.

Returning with the little chest, they set it down beside the lamp. It was dusty and it was warped, and its brass nails were dark with age, but as Richard turned it toward the light he could still read the R. S. C. upon it, though the letters danced and grew dim before his eyes.

"We shall have to break it open," said Lavinia.

"No," dissented Richard, "here is the key. I have carried it — for twenty years — around the world."

The lid swung back, revealing a boyish heap of schoolbooks, a Latin Grammar, bent and ragged, a Horace with *Richard S. Clendenin* cut upon its binding. The latter its owner opened, and instantly a folded paper slipped from between its leaves and fell to the floor. Janet and Lavinia both reached for it, and both gave a gasp as the light struck it. *It was Peter Wallichner's missing agreement.*

By morning the four elders of the church had the news and hastened to the parsonage. Then with the precious document in hand they proceeded to Peter Wallichner's house, the minister bringing up the rear in his threadbare dressing-gown, which flapped about his heels. It was a triumphal procession. No gilded chariots with captive princes chained to their wheels ever moved with a more exultant air. In a few minutes they were assembled in the Wallichner kitchen.

Peter, though unmistakably surprised, was bland as ever. He smiled when they unfolded the paper

and pointed out to him his own signature. But before he could make any reply, the door opened again and his son entered, just arrived from the train.

"Father," he said, "I've come to beg your pardon." Then at sight of the session of the church he stopped. "Gentlemen," he explained, "I must correct a mistake. You may be interested to know that the Delta Portland Cement Company has purchased from my father a property, the deed for which was recorded at the Court House yesterday. I have here a description." And he began to read certain penciled words from a notebook.

His audience listened in bewilderment. Then light dawned — for the land which he sold was that formerly owned by David Walker and was located fully three miles from the spot on which they now stood.

George finished speaking. His father chuckled and said nothing. Neither did the session of the church. They stood there, a foolish row of five, like a class of schoolboys who have forgotten their lesson.

It was Samuel Boyd who finally turned and took Peter warmly by the hand.

"The next time you want to sell land," he said, "we'll promise not to interfere."

"Dat is all right," responded Peter. "De next time you vill vait vonce till you know." And he chuckled again as the session of the Presbyterian church took its homeward way down the lane.

CHAPTER XX

THE PROMISED LAND

To Lavinia the news meant just one thing — David. They had kept faith with her, these fields and hills, and by their constancy she knew that David would come back. He had not said so yet; indeed he had made no reply to her last letter. But when his answer did come — a sense of youth possessed her, of racing, red-blooded joy. Around her were the mellow marks of autumn, but in her heart it was exultant spring.

In this mood she skimmed across the meadow to the Walkers', her feet as light as in the days when she and David had raced each other home; and found Mrs. Walker — for the first time in a year — downstairs. Beside her sat her husband with an open letter. The two were holding each other's hands like children.

For an instant she gazed at them in surprise, and then they lifted to her the glad faces of those who see at last the greenness upon the farther edge of their desert and feel the freshening breeze upon its hot sands.

The letter which they thrust into her hands swam before her eyes. And then out of the con-

fusion of its technical phrases, sprang the luminous truth — David was coming — *now!*

Breathless she read it through, and then with fingers of ice returned it to its envelope. For now she had her answer. David was coming back to the Settlement. He was not coming back to her. For a day, he stated, to see no one but his parents. And then to find some obscure spot in the great world where he might begin life anew.

It was Saturday evening when David Walker reached the Settlement, having travelled for hours through a maze of bewilderment. The shrill, shifting city had shrieked mercilessly about his prison-tuned ears; his college town had flaunted great factories before his outraged eyes; even the overgrown villages along the way had jeered at him. And then the fields received him — the long, low, level meadows of his youth. In some such surroundings as these, he deliberated, he must find that quiet spot in which to finish the book which had so occupied those last months in his cell.

And then in an instant he forgot the book, forgot the cell, forgot even his own dishonored self. For out of a cleft in the woods there sprang a road, a smiling, beckoning road which led straight on toward the heart of the Settlement. In a flash the grave, sombre man vanished. He was once more a boy, galloping with Ajax on and on and up and up to where the sumac flamed against the far blue hills.

And to leave it in a day? It was a thing im-

possible. Not if every tree and blade and flower should point at him and shout out his disgrace. A week at least he would allow himself before seeking what obscurity was possible to a ruined man. But what sign was there in nature that he was returning a ruined man? Was nature less tolerant of him than of the rocks whose rifts she healed, and clothed their scars with beauty?

And if nature condemned him not, need he fear the condemnation of man? He had sinned and he had suffered. And now he had come back to begin again. Was he, then, a menace to his friends? Or was it merely pride — unworthy pride — that counseled him to steal away unseen before another sun should set?

And then the train stopped and once more he was following the old road. Once more, as on that morning so long ago when he had set out for college, he was pausing at its turn to fix upon his vision the grey house, the white barn, the dark poplars at the gate. But instead of the gold of morning, there now covered him the silver sheen of twilight. And in its welcome dimness a strange transformation took place. For he felt himself to be not only shielded but cleansed.

The next day he drove to church and sat with his father in the family pew. It was characteristic of the Settlement that not a head was turned as he entered. Only the minister watched him from the pulpit before he rose to begin his sermon on

"Moses Prevented from Entering the Promised Land."

Indeed, there was a dignity about David Walker that rebuked curiosity. His tall figure was muscular still, but his face was that of an ascetic. The clear pallor of his skin suggested the cloister. He might have been some medieval anchorite, purged by penance and prayer.

He sat quietly and showed no sign of feeling except once, when Lavinia Clendenin entered. Her face was girlish still in its coloring, but her abundant hair — at thirty — was almost white. The hot blood surged to his face at sight of the sweet anachronism — a rose blooming in the snow.

After the benediction the whole congregation severally greeted him, but he turned from them to whisper to Lavinia,

"May I come tonight?"

That afternoon upon the shaded porch his father and mother listened while he unfolded to them his plans for the future and showed how a man may begin life even at thirty-two.

"And I mean," he announced, "to begin it here — here on the old place where the Walkers have lived for so many generations. I never thought I'd be the last of them."

He paused abruptly, and his mother, turning towards him the soft radiance of her face, laid her hand on his.

"But of course it must be so," he resumed.

"A tarnished name —" He laughed, but his eyes were wistful. "Mr. Clendenin was right today," he admitted. "It's pretty hard to *see* the Promised Land and then —

"But after all," he finished gravely, "we get what we earn."

Lavinia that evening received David in the old parlor. The esteemed ancestors still looked politely down from the walls. Jeremy Taylor still supported Richard Baxter upon the book-shelf.

After twelve years the door again stood open with the fragrance of the lilies sweeping in. Lavinia in a violet gown seemed — even with her white hair — just the old Lavinia. Yet this Lavinia was quieter— and more radiant.

"It is good of you," David began, "to let me come. When people like those blessed two at home stand by one, and then you —" He paused helplessly.

Lavinia laid her two hands upon his shoulders gravely.

"David," she said, "I could not come to you as they could. I could only wait for you here."

She got no further, for he caught her wrists in a grip of steel.

"Lavinia," he commanded sternly, "do not dare to say that unless —" his voice broke —"unless," he finished at last, "you mean it."

She was silent for the space of a pulse-beat. Then she said a little breathlessly,

"Why, yes, David, I have always meant it."

To Lavinia at the moment the sweetness of the lilies seemed to swell like a flood until it swept from memory the long years. But David knew only that he had entered his Promised Land.

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY